

**The Devil is in the Details:**  
**Access for Newcomer Learners to ESL and ABE**  
**Programs in St. John's**  
**Condensed Edition**

The Coalition on Richer Diversity (CORD)  
and the Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council (RIAC)

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# Introduction

## *Aim*

The aim of the research discussed in this report is to:

- provide an overview of the circumstances of newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) looking for basic level employment here;
- describe present facilities through which newcomers can get educational support in Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) towards gaining employment in NL;
- identify barriers and facilitators to access;
- identify efforts to remove barriers; and
- make recommendations about further actions which might remove more barriers.

## *Definitions*

By newcomers we mean immigrants and refugees (mainly those who are not mother-tongue speakers of English) who have been in NL for less than ten years. We exclude newcomers who had a job to come to in Canada, or full-time post-secondary students.

Service delivery agencies refer to organizations whose main mandate is to provide services specifically for newcomers, and to agencies and institutions providing general services such as health care, education, early childhood education, youth support, and so on.

We roughly define the target learning opportunities to be accessed as English as a Second Language (ESL) and basic level adult education (ABE) leading to high school leaving certificates or entry into trades certification or comparable programs.

Barriers to access might include issues such as:

- the lack of appropriate educational programs which newcomers need to gain employment;
- lack of effective counselling about availability and cost;
- poor quality of information for newcomers about programs and how to access them;
- inappropriate, expensive or unfair entry requirements, and so on.

## *Rationale*

The authors of this report, that is the Coalition on Richer Diversity (CORD) and the Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council (RIAC), work largely through collaboration with immigrants and the many organizations they come in contact with as they establish themselves in NL. A large proportion of the concerns brought to us by clients is that they cannot find information crucial to their search for employment or for the kinds of training required to qualify for reasonable work. The present report is the result of our attempts to understand and find some solutions to these challenges for newcomers.

# **Issues of Access to ABE and ESL: Four Studies in Newfoundland and Labrador**

We have undertaken four phases of a research/action project starting in 2007 in collaboration with immigrants and social service deliverers in relevant fields.

## ***Phase One: Immigrants in Adult Basic Literacy Programs***

Through consultation with and a survey of literacy program practitioners around the province (2007-2008), it appears that by far the most non-English speaking immigrants taking part in the Adult Basic Education I programs were enrolled in two agencies in St. John's.

## ***Phase Two: Interchange and Perspectives from ESL and ABE Practitioners***

In 2009, the CORD ESL Literacy Sharing Project (with support from Literacy NL) held meetings in St. John's to introduce practitioners of ESL to their counterparts in adult basic literacy to learn about each others' teaching experiences and to discuss ways in which the two groups might support each other. This exchange raised many new questions about differences between ESL teaching for adults as compared with ABE for adults with low levels of education.

## ***Phase Three: Exploring the Range of ESL and ABE Services in St. John's***

Phase Two revealed how complex ESL and ABE training is, and how potential learners may not be able to find a niche to meet their needs. CORD interviewed 15 community-based service providers, finding a complex set of programs with various kinds of accessibility. Our findings on urgently needed action on ESL and literacy programs were:

More collaboration among local leaders and practitioners on ESL and literacy programs especially for newcomers with low levels of formal education;

- A clear description of service provision in ESL and literacy, and analysis of gaps and barriers to access for newcomers;
- Identification and development of suitable pre-service training and professional development for practitioners to address current learners' needs;
- Identification and development of resources which both literacy and ESL practitioners could share among themselves to support their practice;
- A broad dialogue among government and NGO leaders on the need for and accessibility to suitable language and academic programming for newcomers.

## ***Phase Four: Filling in Many of the Information Gaps***

We followed our own advice above, "Starting with the information collected in the Phase Three project, a clear description of service provision in ESL and literacy is needed along with an analysis of gaps and barriers to access for newcomers." This report is the result.

# **The Bricks and Mortar of Access to ABE and ESL in NL**

## ***FEDERAL APPROACHES TO ESL AND ABE***

Since the 1960s various forms of ESL programs for immigrants have been funded by the federal Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC)'s Immigrant Settlement Assistance Program (ISAP). The best known CIC support is the ESL program (LINC). ISAP and other CIC initiatives for newcomers include support for settlement needs and help to join the labourforce.

Since the 1980s, the federal government officially separates funded services for ESL from those for adult literacy. The federal government does not fund delivery of adult basic education, but does fund development of resources related to access to employment. In practice, this approach has led to challenges in separating the needs of and programs for immigrant ESL learners and/or those wishing to improve their basic literacy skills (Folinsbee, 2007).

A recent report based on national and international statistics, *Adult Learning in Canada: A Comparative Perspective, Results from the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey* (Rubenson, Desjardins, & Yoon, 2007) indicates characteristics of those people in Canada least likely to take part in adult education. The newcomer population in focus in the present study falls directly within the scope of the group described as "vulnerable" in terms of access to adult education.

## ***IMMIGRATION CLASS AND STATUS IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR***

Goss Gilroy Inc. (2005) wrote an extensive report as groundwork for the development of the first immigration policy for Newfoundland and Labrador. Immigration regulations involve a number of "classes" which stipulate criteria by which applicants for immigration to Canada can be considered. Most newcomers who need support through ESL and ABE come to Canada via the following two classes.

**Family class immigrants** made up a significantly lower proportion of those coming the province compared to the proportion across Canada – 19.0% compared to 30.5%.

This group is protected for 10 years by their family sponsors so that their essential expenses such as tuition fees should be guaranteed by their sponsor.

**Protected persons** made up 32.8% of immigration to the province compared to 11.9% of those coming to Canada as a whole. This is largely due to Government Assisted Refugees. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in consultation with the provincial government, establishes an annual allocation of Government Assisted Refugees to the province (now set at 155), based on our capacity to accommodate refugees and provide settlement services. (Goss Gilroy, 2005, pp. 9-10)

The fact that the proportion of protected persons in NL is much higher than that in the rest of Canada is crucial. Protected persons are, more or less by definition, people who:

- do not have a job waiting for them when they come;
- have not made any preparations for coming to live in Canada;
- may not have any documentation of their academic credentials or work experience;
- may have been en route from their home countries as refugees for a number of years; and
- are likely to have suffered a good deal of trauma before leaving their home countries and afterwards in getting here.

Overall, there are some basic, relevant factors in NL concerning newcomers most likely to need access to ESL and AB E support.

- This province normally receives fewer newcomers relative to its population than Canada as a whole. This factor might indicate a proportionately low profile in NL for efforts to help newcomers become an active part in the NL population.
- Figures on newcomers to NL as a whole (all immigration classes) include; (a) many highly educated, highly paid, English proficient, economic immigrants, on the one hand, and (b) on the other hand, almost equal numbers of family class and protected persons class who are much less likely to have a job to come to on arrival, English language proficiency, or access to financial means to pay educational expenses.
- Newcomer women in NL as a whole have a high chance, relative to their counterparts elsewhere in Canada, of being on social assistance and a low income.

## ***ESL PROGRAMS AVAILABLE***

### **Full Time**

In NL, the only federally funded ESL program (LINC) is carried out by **the Association for New Canadians (ANC)**, and is available free of charge to permanent residents of Canada (priority to Government Assisted Refugees) who have been in Canada less than four years, and who have not taken Canadian citizenship. Child minding, transportation and other supports are

available for students in the program. Part-time programs are also available. Income support is provided for those who need it. Learners are assessed and placed from the three “Foundation Levels” (not literate in any language) and from Level 1 to Level 5 on the federal Benchmark scale (CLBA). If prospective learners are assessed on arrival as having English skills above the fifth level, they are not admitted to the LINC school. For those permanent resident newcomers who have not yet gained Canadian citizenship, and/or have been here for less than four years, and/or test higher than Level 5, the ANC has facilities to help them to pass the tests of English language offered in the province (TOEFL and TOEIC) and support to learn about other employment or certification related matters.

**Memorial University’s ESL programming** has two basic components.

(1) A 12-week intensive program basically designed for would-be students or students who have been admitted to a Memorial academic program but who have not yet passed one of the required English proficiency tests. This Intensive English program is focussed on the skills needed by a student in an academic setting. Only would-be Memorial students normally take these programs.

(2) Five -week summer schools are offered, mainly English immersion programs for people from Quebec or even other countries. Fees for these programs are substantial.

([www.mun.ca/esl/about](http://www.mun.ca/esl/about))

Skills to help international students and their families cope with their new environment are taught informally through the International Student Advisor’s Office.

According to their calendar (2009/10) and website ([www.cna.nl.ca](http://www.cna.nl.ca)), the **College of the North Atlantic (CNA)** offers English as a Second Language at the Prince Philip Drive Campus.

College of the North Atlantic offers the English as a Second Language program which is designed to address language training for a variety of academic, personal and social goals. ESL courses in listening, speaking reading and writing are offered at five levels: Beginner, Intermediate I, Intermediate II, Advanced I and Advanced II. Students enrolled in Advanced Levels are offered the opportunity to enroll in College level credit courses, as part of their ESL study..... Students must be 17 years of age at the commencement date of the program.

Fees are charged for this program.

## **Part-time Opportunities in ESL for Adults**

Newcomers who are not native speakers of English, whatever their background or objectives, have a few opportunities to improve their English on a part-time basis at no cost. Whether or not they are eligible for the LINC program, they can still attend a once-a-week evening ESL class at the Association for New Canadians. On Thursday evenings there are three classes offered (beginner, intermediate and advanced). This program is supported by the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism. Other programs are offered by the Refugee and

Immigrant Advisory Council, the Office of the International Student Advisor at MUN (for international students and their families) and the Daybreak Parent and Child Centre.

## ***TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPPORT IN ESL IN NL***

**TESL Canada** (the National Federation of English as a Second Language Teachers, Learners and Learners' Advocates) has created a certification standard for ESL teachers of adult students in non-credit education programs. These standards include: bachelors degree; courses in applied linguistics and ESL teaching methods; a practicum; and documented hours of successful classroom teaching. TESL Canada also certifies institutions which provide ESL teacher training in Canada as meeting their program specifications. All provinces except NL have at least one TESL Canada certified ESL teacher training program.

**Memorial University** offers a diploma in English as a Second Language based on a set of courses offered by the Departments of English Language and Literature, Linguistics, and Education. It includes a practicum ([www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=ARTS-0274#ARTS=0275](http://www.mun.ca/regoff/calendar/sectionNo=ARTS-0274#ARTS=0275)).

Faculty of Education courses in second language teaching are generally aimed towards teachers of French in the school system.

**Other supports** for ESL teachers are available through TESL NL, the NL affiliate of TESL Canada.

## ***ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE) AIMED AT EMPLOYMENT***

The focus here is on education/training for newcomers with less than recognized Canadian high school leaving credentials, or their officially recognized equivalent, and who need this status for access to employment. High school credentials from other countries are not often recognized by significant educational or employment authorities in NL. Therefore, newcomers take ABE training programs to get NL high school credentials. Some have cultural or English fluency issues which affect their performance in local, formal classes in ABE.

### **The Department of Education and ABE Programs**

The Adult Learning and Literacy Division of the Department of Education, NL, has created a definition of ABE programs and provides funding for them.

[www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/adultlearning/abe.html](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/adultlearning/abe.html) .

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is a provincial program for adult learners and is made up of three levels: Level I refers to basic literacy and roughly equates to K-6; Level II is considered equivalent to grades 7-9; Level III corresponds to grades

10-12 and requires the completion of a minimum of 36 credits to graduate.

A number of non-profit community-based centres have contracted with the Department of Education to offer the ABE Level I program... [also] a limited number of College of the North Atlantic sites and some private training institutions.

### **ABE Level I Implementations**

Newcomers who get no ESL study such as LINC, or who do not leave the ESL program with enough English skills to suit their needs and plans, and/or have no other options for ESL within their community have found themselves in literacy classes because these opportunities are available to provide at least some of the learning opportunities which the learners seek. Literacy programs are often provided by charitable organizations and rely heavily on volunteer tutors (Folinsbee, 2007). In St. John's, newcomers have started to go in increasing numbers to two major literacy NGOs (see Phase I project).

### **ABE Levels II and III Implementations**

The College of the North Atlantic's statistics keeping system only identify learners as "international" or not, so we were unable to get figures on *immigrant* students in the College's programs as opposed to students on student visas. Several of the private colleges offer programs in ABE Levels 2 and 3. None we spoke to said they had immigrant students.

## ***ENTRANCE TESTS, PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT & CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION***

CNA, many private colleges and other community employment assistance agencies use the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) as a means of student placement in ABE programs. This test is not validated for non-native English speakers. The federally developed Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES), which has started to replace the CAAT, is not validated for non-native English speakers either.

Credential recognition is a hot topic. Our analysis of published recommendations (below) shows the focus to be on professional credentials requiring university-level graduation, particularly in medicine. While this is clearly a very important issue, it is beyond the scope of the present discussion. We did not get any information on credentialing in the trades.

The College of the North Atlantic, and other institutions offering adult education, support applicants in having their competencies assessed through Prior Learning Assessment

(PLA) and in having some outcomes recognized as credit towards a high school diploma. A number of the colleges offer students an opportunity to study for the GED (General Educational Development) test, an adult-friendly assessment of skills equivalent to those of a high school diploma.

## ***FEES, LIVING SUPPORT, AND OTHER CHALLENGES***

Expense is a very important factor for most newcomers in the categories we are considering here because they are not employed. Costs for ABE might include tuition fees, income support for full-time training, and others such as transportation, child care, school supplies and the like. Newcomers (and their counsellors) need accurate, detailed information about fees and supports to cover them.

### **Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)**

The Canadian Government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) provides services to permanent residents recently arrived. The CIC website ([www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)) outlines the kinds of supports available to newcomers, in addition to most of the basic rights of citizens.

The Government of Canada offers a variety of services to help you adjust to life in Canada.

**Community services for newcomers include free services** such as:

- language training;
- help with everyday tasks;
- finding a job;
- helping newcomers adjust to life in Canada

In **Newfoundland and Labrador, CIC supported services** are available at:

- Association for New Canadians (Newfoundland): general help; language assessment centres; language training; job-specific language training; job search help; help for government-assisted refugees; volunteer with newcomers.
- Fédération Francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador: general help; job search help.  
([www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca))

### **Human Resources, Labour, and Employment, Newfoundland and Labrador (HRLE)**

Basically, HRLE takes over in providing income and other supports for newcomers who

still need them once their CIC supports run out. The provincial benefits cover substantially the same kinds of needs as those from CIC. The list includes provisions for Employment Development Supports, Supports to Attend Adult Basic Education Training, and Income Support Benefits as described on the HRLE website ([www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/income-support/overview.html](http://www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/income-support/overview.html)).

## **Tuition Fees**

### **ESL**

Memorial University's ESL program - \$3,500 for a 12 week semester

College of the North Atlantic ESL program - \$726 + \$95 for a semester for local students

ANC LINC - \$3,500 per 12 weeks for students who are *not* eligible for regular LINC program

### **ABE**

College of the North Atlantic ABE

Level I fees covered by the Department of Education

Levels II and III fees – \$726 + \$95 per term full-time

One private college which listed ABE levels I, II, and III, gave their fees as \$165/ week. This institution also charged a \$50 fee for assessment through PLA. It cannot be assumed that these fees from one college are representative of all private college fees in NL.

# **Published Research, Consultation and Policy Recommendations**

## **Related to Access to ESL or ABE by Immigrants**

### ***Introduction to Research Findings***

The dynamics shaping integration of two or more populations which differ from each other in many ways must take into account the feelings, perceptions and motivations of the players involved. Any issue about immigration in NL, no matter how small, inevitably raises a broad scope of contingent matters. Concerns about services for immigrants have not had a high profile on the public agenda in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (post Confederation). However, from the early 2000s, the provincial government started developing a home-grown immigration policy. This prompted a number of studies as well as recommendations from community organizations. To give our study flesh on its bones, a review of nine of these documents was undertaken, listed here in chronological order.

Gilad, Lisa (1990). *The northern route: An ethnography of refugee experiences*. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research.

Goss Gilroy Inc. (2005). *Retention and integration of immigrants in Newfoundland and Labrador – Are we ready?*. St. John's, NL: Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Coordinating Committee on Newcomer Integration.

Locke, Wade & Lynch, Scott. (2005). *A Survey of the Attitudes of Employers in Newfoundland and Labrador toward the Recruitment and Employment of New Canadians and International Workers*. St. John's, The Harris Centre, Memorial University.

Sarma-Debnath, Kaberi & Kutty, Yamuna.(2006). *Occupational Accommodation for New Immigrants and Refugees in Newfoundland and Labrador: Understanding the Roadblocks, Challenges and Barriers in Labour Market Integration*. St. John's: Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2007). *Report of consultations on a provincial immigration strategy: "What we heard"*. Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador: St. John's, NL.

Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2007). *An immigration strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador: Opportunity for growth*. Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador: St. John's, NL.

Coalition on Richer Diversity (2007). *A report on focus group outcomes*. St. John's: Coalition on Richer Diversity ([www.cancord.org](http://www.cancord.org)).

Leslie Harris Centre. (2008). *Report of the Immigration and Settlement Workshop*. St. John's: The Leslie Harris Centre, Memorial University.

Burnaby, B., Whelan, J. & Rivera, J. (2009) *Pilot Project: A 20 Year Comparison on Immigration Retention in NL*. St. John's, Leslie Harris Centre, Memorial University.  
([http://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/research/funding/immigration/IRF\\_Burnaby\\_2009\\_04\\_27.pdf](http://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/research/funding/immigration/IRF_Burnaby_2009_04_27.pdf)) ([www.cancord.org](http://www.cancord.org))

Documents which contain information mainly from newcomers are Gilad; and Sarma-Debnath and Kutty. Goss Gillroy; the HRLE consulting process; CORD; and Burnaby, Whelan and Rivera partly use information from newcomers. It is less certain what role immigrant perspectives played in the final immigration policy writing or in the Harris Centre Symposium. The Locke and Lynch study was done specifically with local employers.

Our analysis revealed four major categories, some of which have two or three themes within them.

**(1) The Big Picture: Overall Perceptions on Immigration in NL and Main Issues**

**(2) What Needs to be Fixed Directly: Priorities Indicated among the Recommendations**

*Adult Education and ESL Programming*

*Issues of Access to Essential Information about Policies and Programs*

**(3) Who Should/Must Be Involved: Necessary Participation in Decisions and Action**

*Integrate Immigration Services with NL General Initiatives and Partners*

*Consult Immigrants, Employ Them to Do Settlement Work, and Train Local Settlement Workers Properly for Immigrant Settlement Work*

**(4) Means of Fixing These Issues: Strategies for Change**

*Preparing Employers*

*Accreditation*

*Evaluate Relevant Programs*

***The Big Picture: Overall Perceptions on Immigration in NL and Main Issues***

In this section, background factors are identified as a context for and influence on specific issues, including retention, related to access to ESL and ABE programs by newcomers.

In comparing immigrants' and NL residents' overall perspectives about immigration, we see a major divide in the psychological and practical perspectives between the two groups. Refugees are overwhelmed by their experiences of leaving their homes under horrible circumstances and suffering along the way, so accommodating to the norms of the NL situation is an uphill battle involving personal healing as well as learning the structure of a whole new society. Newcomers from other immigration classes are likely to be similarly but somewhat less affected. On the other hand, Newfoundlanders have little reason to examine their own perspectives on newcomers, change their ways to accommodate to newcomers' needs, or make specific efforts to appreciate newcomers' positions. The divide between the two positions is not often hostile from either side, but is rooted in different necessities and priorities in each group.

Views about specific services for newcomers indicate a variety of concerns such as: adequacy; appropriateness; transparency; involvement of appropriate players; and so on. Relevant NGOs are reported to be fractious among themselves, often because the rules of various governments conflict and force service bodies to work *sub rosa*. The evidence suggests a strong priority for finding out what the divisive issues are. The present lack or poor quality of service is more costly in the long run than providing adequate services. Emphasis was on informing newcomers clearly and effectively about the learning possibilities available for them.

Lip service is paid to finding solutions to some issues, while it appears that some are not being addressed at all. Government attitudes towards immigration are perceived as:

- "Governments and local populations think only in terms of what is in it for us?" (CORD, [www.cancord.org](http://www.cancord.org)), or
- "A commitment is needed across and within levels of government to agree upon guiding principles for the funding of immigrant employment initiatives. There needs to be a new implementation strategy that provides a continuum of employment-related interventions" (Sarma-Debnath & Kutty, p. 29).

Finally, from the NL government's policy itself, we selected three goals (Goal 4, Goal 8, and Goal 17) because they are perhaps the most far-reaching and general positions in the policy. It appears that the only new money is to "fund settlement service providers". All the rest are promises to "build", "expand", "improve" (through workshops for front-line workers), "increase", "enhance", and "research". Only one goal, an increase in retention of newcomers, has any specific targets mentioned which could be used to gauge success. The policy notes the value of "work[ing] with" other levels of government to identify barriers, and "with employer groups" but consultation with immigrants was not mentioned.

## ***What Needs to Be Fixed Directly: Priorities Indicated among the Recommendations***

In this section, our priority for recommendations relate specifically to: (1) ESL and ABE programming and (2) issues of access to essential information about policies and programs. A description of existing ABE and ESL programs and their support structures was provided elsewhere in this report. Against those backdrops, recommendations specifically about ABE and ESL are considered here.

### **ABE and ESL Programming**

Sarma-Debnath and Kutty heard from their newcomer focus groups and interviews that the programs newcomers want to take to get them into the labourforce are either: (1) not in existence; (2) not well enough linked to actual employers; (3) not well funded or organized by government; (4) not long or continuous enough; and (5) hard to get information about. Community stakeholders' recommendations about ESL and employment-related ABE emphasized the importance of client-centred programming, situation-centred curricula, and adequate funding. Newcomers' problems with access to ABE may reflect confusion over needs for ESL rather than for ABE in order for them to enter trades certification programs. Many newcomers enrol in ABE programs because of lack of access to suitable ESL programs.

In newcomers' attempts to get certification in the trades through ABE studies, the credentialing issue is the recognition of newcomers' high school graduation in their home countries. Getting such an assessment is, to the best of our knowledge, rarely recommended to newcomers, and is performed by a provincial official. If this high school graduation credit could be obtained, some newcomers might be able to enter directly into a trades program rather than going through ABE first. A review is needed of how Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) or some other form of recognition of previous learning or academic credit are actually being used at MUN, CNA and elsewhere (e.g., private colleges) for newcomers.

Trades certification bodies are rarely mentioned in the literature we reviewed. Requirements for high school completion, training in trade-specific skills, and needs for appropriate ESL skills must be considered as a whole in the development of training for accessible employment of newcomers.

In the 2007 provincial immigration policy, Goal 6 is relevant here.

*Goal 6: To ensure the availability of Enhanced Language Training (ELT) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for immigrant adults.*

- *Increase access to Enhanced Language Training (enhance funding to service providers such as the ANC)*
- *Increase access to ESL programs throughout the province (Explore on-line delivery. Fund*

*language service providers) (p. 12)*

Enhanced Language Training (ELT), initiated by CIC in 2004, is aimed at ESL focussed particularly on employment ([www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/partner/elt-spo.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/partner/elt-spo.asp)). The Association for New Canadians has been funded by CIC to offer ELT since 2004. The province has supported the ANC by funding an evening class in ESL. It is important to follow up to see how effective this federal and provincial funding has been for newcomers who test beyond Level 5 in LINC.

Virtually all other ESL available to newcomers in NL charge substantial fees.

Goals 6 is ambitious since there are so few people with ESL expertise in NL to conduct or design the target learning opportunities for newcomers.

Goal 7: *To reduce barriers to recognition of international credentials and competencies* (p. 13) seems relevant, but elsewhere in the document only professional credentials are discussed.

## **Issues of Access to Essential Information about Policies and Programs**

The question of dissemination of information can seem deceptively simple. However, newcomers are angry and afraid that they are not getting essential information about many aspects of their lives in a new country. Recommendations by immigrants focus on the cultural more than the linguistic aspects of communication, but sometimes they simply do not understand messages spoken or written in English. In other cases, they get negative social and practical messages loud and clear about how the local population regards them.

Some authors listed a number of problematic systems of providing information as well as agencies who are not informing newcomers as would be expected. One proposal was for an umbrella organization as part of a solution to communication problems, and suggests that there are less than 'honest' players in the field. Also, there was a call for research on the effectiveness of various aspects of communication to help ensure better information flow between newcomers and the local population. There were requests for a wide, long-lasting and coordinated research approach to identifying services and realistically promoting what services are available. Public consultations raised the issues of the complexity ('red tape') of information needed by immigrants, as well as the effort required to get through to the actual gatekeepers of services.

In the provincial government immigration policy, 2007, communication was addressed in Goal 3.

*Goal 3: To encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to welcome immigrants. Ensure that immigrants throughout the province have access to information and*

*support resources (develop a resource booklet entitled “Welcome to Newfoundland and Labrador” outlining useful information for new immigrants. Establish an “Immigrant Support Network”). (p.7)*

The effectiveness of creating a “Welcome to Newfoundland and Labrador” booklet is not likely to be great. The call for a ‘manual’ seems naive in light of the complexity of the amount of information actually needed as well as the speed with which relevant information changes. Since the 1980s until about two years ago, the Multicultural Womens Organization NL developed lists of resources related to immigration and newcomers’ needs, funded from federal sources.

As for the Provincial Government creating an “Immigrant Support Network”, we note that CORD was created in 2007 to serve as an umbrella group for organizational and individual stakeholders concerned with immigration issues. (See [www.cancord.org](http://www.cancord.org)).

## ***Who Should/Must Be Involved? Necessary Participation in Decisions and Action***

### **Integrate Immigrant Services with NL Government General Initiatives and Partners**

The research conducted by Goss Gilroy as background for a new immigration policy emphasizes that a broad range of stakeholders are implied and should be involved, under strong government leadership, and the work overall should be evaluated. Burnaby *et al.* (2009) add that there are many kinds of government policies which can impinge on newcomer settlement, some beyond the obvious. A symposium, as recommended in the provincial policy, was conducted by the Harris Centre; its outcomes are reported on here among sources of recommendations. Perhaps a regular series of such symposia is needed.

Recommendations, including goals in the provincial immigration policy, suggest that various levels of government, government initiatives, and personnel within governments need to be included in attracting and retaining newcomers. Many of the services needed by immigrants also overlap with those of other groups of newcomers such as international students and their families.

From the provincial immigration policy (2007):

*Goal 18: To engage key partners in the implementation of the provincial immigration strategy.*

- Settlement-providing Organizations. (p. 28)
- Educational Institutions [this section’s recommendations refer only to international

- students and the recruitment of professors.] (p. 28)
- Professional Associations/Regulatory Bodies (Engage professional associations and licensing/regulatory bodies..... (p. 29)
- Business and Industry, Organized Labour, Rural Secretariat, Municipal Governments, and Regional Development Boards and Agencies (p. 29-30)
- Ethnic, Religious and Volunteer Groups. (p. 30)

Although the 2007 immigration policy listed many partners, it appears that little new money was promised. Instead, it seems that new responsibilities for immigration in NL are expected of those who already support immigration-related work financially and through community work. The initiative to eliminate barriers in provincial policies and programs is admirable, but perhaps more than “workshops” will be required.

The Association for New Canadians was praised extensively in the policy statement itself, and is listed first among the partner groups. In the text accompanying the policy statements themselves, it is noted that the ANC has been the only agency in the province to receive the federal funding assigned to supporting immigrant settlement in the province. Since the time of the NL policy announcement, a further agency has been added, Fédération Francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador. Across the country, NL is in the group (along the three Canadian territories) to have only two CIC funded immigrant serving agencies. Even PEI has three CIC supported agencies and Saskatchewan has 23.

## **Consult Immigrants, Employ Them to do Settlement Work, and Train Local Workers Properly for Immigration/Settlement Work**

Various stakeholders see the need for more direct involvement by immigrants in advising about policies and needs, and in actually being employed in service delivery at several levels. During the process of analyses of all the major players (government, government sponsored, and community) it would be useful to include a census of the numbers of newcomers involved in each organization or service.

Some of the recommendations are:

- the need to hire or train professionals specifically to work with immigrants in essential community services;
- hire immigrants with professional training and experience in social service work;
- the need for the immigrant voice in policy making;
- Some immigrants will not approach certain service providers because they fear discrimination.

The discussion above on partnerships, in the provincial immigration policy in Goal 18, listed a broad range of partners; however, collaboration directly with immigrants account for

very little direct communication with immigrants. It is difficult to tell the extent to which Goal 11 might increase the dialogue.

*Goal 11: To ensure that existing government policies and programs do not create barriers for immigrants in the province.*

....

- *Address gaps in government policies that may serve to create barriers for immigrants. (Work with the Public Service Commission to ensure hiring practices do not create systemic barriers for immigrants. While encompassing the principles of merit, assess the need for and elements of a diversity policy and strategy for the public service.)*

### ***Methods for Fixing These Issues: Strategies for Change***

In this final section of analysis of recommendations, ideas and information relating to methods of addressing the issues on access by newcomer adults to ABE and ESL are discussed.

### **Preparing Employers**

Recommendations from immigrants indicate that cultural issues about the way they are treated, especially on matters of relations with workplaces and workplace related training, are significant. The thrust of recommendations by NL community members relates to strategies for increasing newcomers' access to programs and services for newcomers. However, if this approach is the only one used, it reflects an attitude of blaming the victim, and requiring change only on the part of newcomers as the major solution rather than complementary changes in the workplace or community.

The study by Locke & Lynch (2005) on employers' views paints an overall picture of ambivalence of employers about an increase in newcomers seeking to enter the local labourforce. Clearly, worries about newcomers taking jobs away from local workers have not disappeared. There appears to be a reluctance for employers to take on extra costs that might be incurred in training needed by newcomer workers. Awareness needs to be raised among employers about those programs currently existing for supporting newcomers to access employment here.

The consultation by the provincial government for the new immigration policy suggests that employers as well as government should shoulder some of the burden of accommodating needs of newcomers entering the labourforce. Given that a central thrust of the immigration policy is the importance of newcomers in the economy in the future, such concerns about employers' attitudes are crucial.

The provincial immigration policy (2007) partially relates newcomer retention with improved access to employment through collaboration with service providers and employers.

*Goal 4: To increase and enhance settlement and integration services in the province aimed at increasing retention of immigrants.*

- *Expand labour market integration programs for newcomers (Fund settlement service providers. Work with employer groups) (p. 9).*

An assessment would be useful on the impact of adding new provincial funding to the ANC existing, federally funded assistance to newcomers to enter the labourforce, as well as direct provincial action to engage employers.

## **Accreditation**

There are many recommendations related to access to information about recognition of newcomers' credentials discussed, but these referred exclusively to professional credentials which require at least an undergraduate degree and involve provincial licensing bodies. However, concerning access to ABE, as we noted above, for newcomers attempting to get certification in the trades through ABE studies, the credentialing issue is the recognition of newcomers' high school graduation in their home countries. Getting such an assessment is, to the best of our knowledge, rarely recommended to newcomers, and is performed by a provincial official. If this high school graduation credit could be obtained, some newcomers might be able to enter directly into a trades program rather than going through ABE first. A review is needed of how Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) or other forms of recognition of previous learning or academic credit are being used at MUN, CNA and elsewhere (e.g., private colleges) for newcomers. Trades certification bodies are rarely mentioned in the literature we reviewed. Requirements for high school completion, training in trade-specific skills, and needs for appropriate ESL skills must be considered as a whole in the development of training for employment of newcomers. Goal 7 of the provincial immigration policy seems to refer mainly to these professional-level credentials (p. 13) (*Goal 7: To reduce barriers to recognition of international credentials and competencies.*)

## **Evaluation**

To the best of our knowledge, an evaluation such as the one recommended by Goss Gilroy (2005) was not conducted prior to the announcement of the new provincial immigration policy.

A review of the overall approach to settlement and integration supports for

immigrants and refugees should be undertaken. Previous evaluation of services in the province have only been done as part of national evaluations of specific programs funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. It would be helpful to review the full range of supports provided by the Association for New Canadians and those delivered through government, government agencies, educational institutions, and community-based organizations..... (p.68)

The value of such evaluation increases since the 2007 policy because of the need to assess the effectiveness of the changes which resulting from the new policy. Consultation before the release of the immigration policy also called for studies “to identify gaps in community services/ supports for immigrants” (p. 17) including attention to children of immigrants and international students.

## Recommendations

In the discussion throughout this report, some necessary actions to be taken by particular agencies are made explicit while others imply more general and distributed action.

### *Specific Actions Needed*

#### **English as a Second Language**

1. A full-time, accessible, affordable, and professional ESL program to cover newcomers' ESL learning needs beyond the Canadian Language Benchmark 5 is essential to the success of NL's present policy on immigration. In most provinces, such services are available and funded by the provincial government through continuing education policies with school boards, or with community colleges and NGOs. Collaborative work between the federal government, some individual provinces, industry and employers have resulted in high quality services which serve newcomers' needs for general language training as well as workplace entry skills. The involvement of industry and employers in the process results in implicit and explicit training for them as well as the newcomers. This province could well adopt and adapt some of the models developed elsewhere.
2. Such an ESL program absolutely requires that high level training for ESL teachers (meeting the standards of TESL Canada) be established in NL and/or that many well qualified ESL teachers be hired from outside the province. MUN is the only existing institution in NL which is likely to have or be able to hire the kinds of specialists needed to conduct such a program. For continuity, other professional development supports for ESL teachers are also needed, perhaps through the auspices of TESL NL.

#### **Adult Basic Education**

1. Discussions between the Department of Education and Human Resources, Labour, and Employment must find agreement either to separate ESL from ABE or develop curriculum and staff expertise to deal with issues of overlap such as informed counselling for students and ESL initial training and in-service for ABE instructors. Probable solutions will involve both approaches.
2. The Department of Education must undertake a significant review of its policies on recognition of high school diplomas obtained outside of Canada. The result would likely be that many newcomers can apply directly to programs leading directly to certification for trades, etc.

3. CNA, private colleges and other institutions must find alternatives to the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) for assessment of non-native speakers' skills and knowledge relative to high school diploma standards. Neither the CAAT nor the new federally developed Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) are normed for non-native speakers of English. Other groups in the province, such as some Aboriginal people, would likely benefit from such assessment improvements as well.

### **Access to ESL and ABE**

An extensive study is required of newcomers' perspectives on their needs for information about:

- financial support programs from all levels of government,
- training available and accessible to them, and
- realistic options for them about employment in the province.

The results must then be used to inform a well-resourced project to:

- develop effective system for delivery of information,
- including a newcomer-friendly resource to help institutions and groups effectively tailor and deliver their information to newcomers, and to
- develop and maintain a clearinghouse of up-to-date information for newcomers from a broad range of stakeholders.

### ***More General Actions Needed***

1. Retention of newcomers to the province will not take place without constant support from many stakeholders on ESL, ABE and many other areas of concern. NGOs and newcomer organizations must be funded adequately so that they can constantly advise governments, educational institutions and crucial stakeholders about their perspectives.
2. Services for newcomers must include a balance of emphasis on settlement issues and employment.
3. A prevalent theme in all the material studied here was the crucial importance of research on newcomer issues and continual evaluation of actions taken.
4. Newcomers must be hired or otherwise involved in all undertakings relating particularly to their well-being in all aspects of their lives in NL. If necessary, affirmative action must be taken.

5. Pre-service and in-service professional development is critical to the on-going improvement of relations between newcomers and the rest of the community. Professions such as social work, medical, law and law enforcement, K-12 teachers, business management and so on must be given strategies and resources to address the specific needs and contributions of newcomers.
6. Employers and trades groups must be consulted consistently about their concerns about newcomers in the labour market. From this, they can take ownership of meaningful solutions created. This process must be continually evolving among employer and trades groups.

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