

**ALTERED MINDS INC. (AMI)  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT  
2015-2016**

**OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

In 2015-16 AMI received funding to deliver 3 programs for immigrants, as follows:

Funding Source	Activities	Amount
Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	1. Entry Program/EP Online - settlement orientation and language for newcomers 2. Living English – summer EAL classes	\$1,506,743 -\$29,519
Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)	3. Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) - services for immigrants destined to Manitoba	\$ 121,721
		<b>\$ 1,598,945</b>

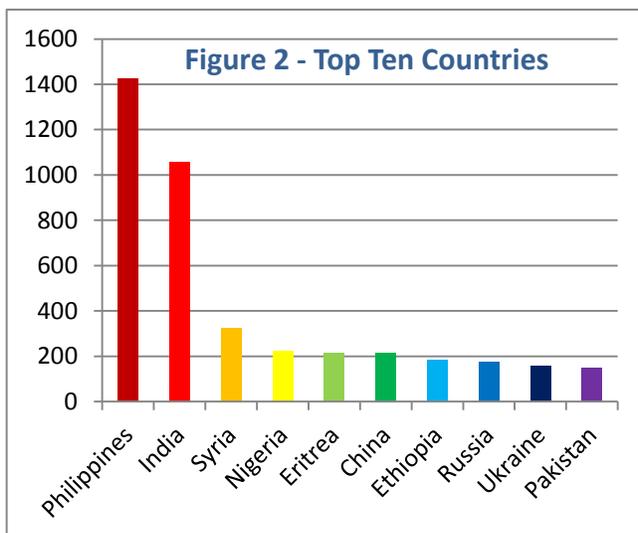
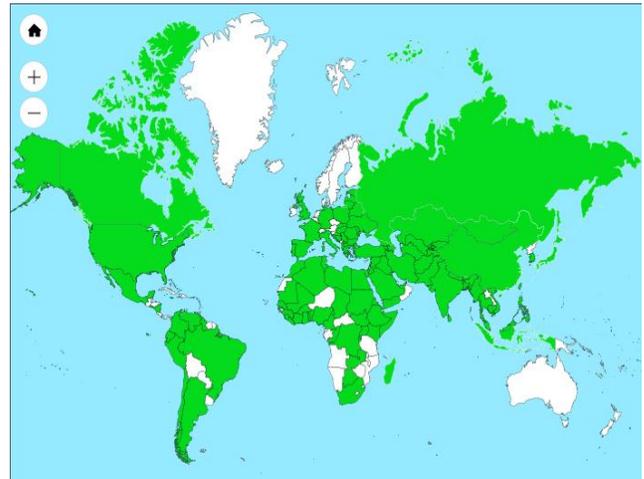
**Entry Program:**

The most memorable event of the year was the huge influx of Syrian refugees from January to March 2016. We sprang into action to coordinate client flow, hire Arabic-speaking staff, rent extra space, and develop an 'Arabic Express' orientation at IRCC's request, to move Syrians quickly through the Entry Program. As a registered donation site with the Red Cross, we collected, sorted and distributed truckloads of clothing and household items to newcomers. Meanwhile, we continued to provide quality services and build a sense of community among all groups.

Here are some interesting Entry Program (EP) statistics for the year:

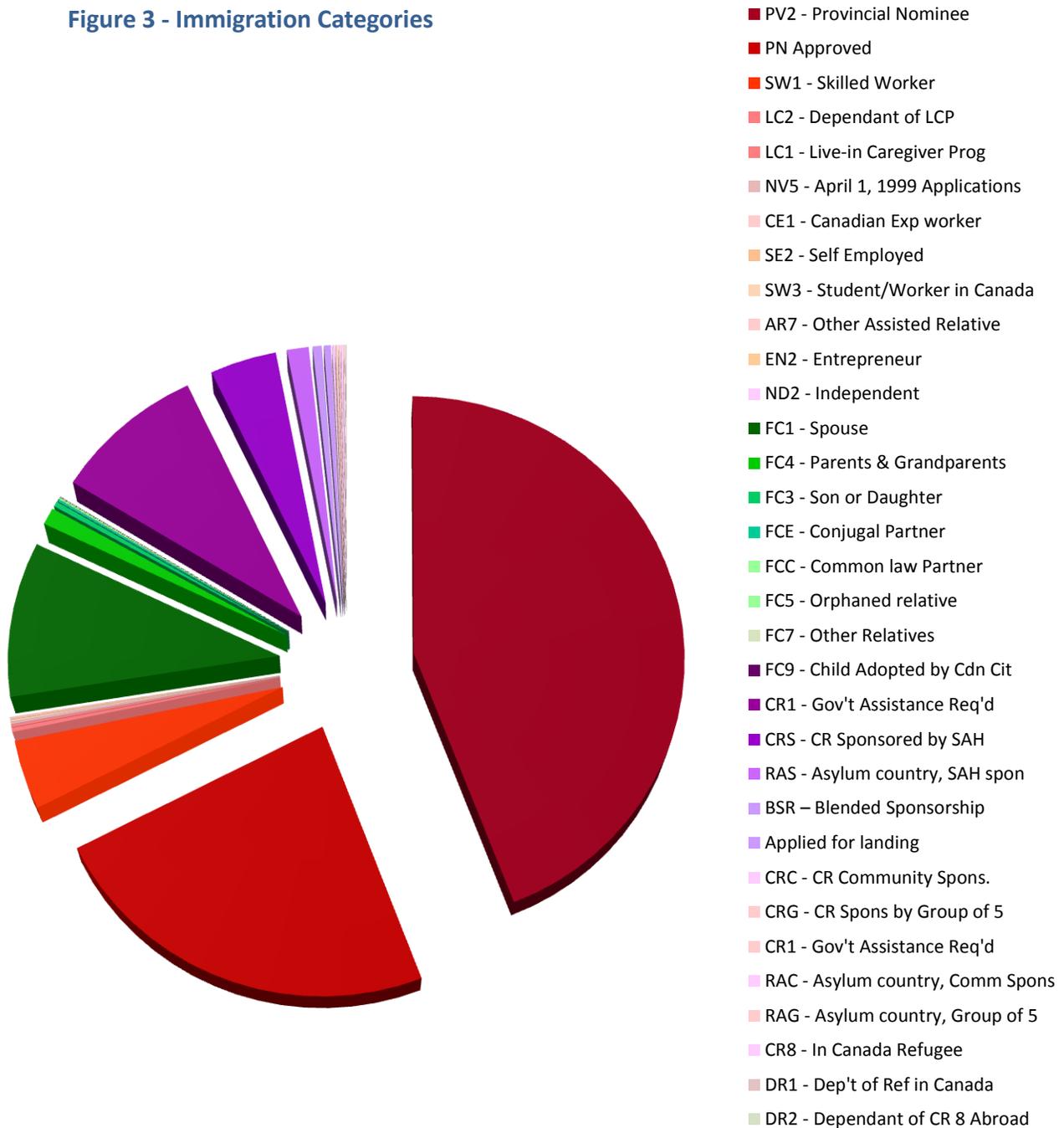
- **4,838** newcomers from **236** countries attended EP in 2015-16 (Fig 1).
- **355** Syrians attended Entry, making them the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest group, at 7% of the total (Fig 2).

**Figure 1 – 236 Countries of Origin**



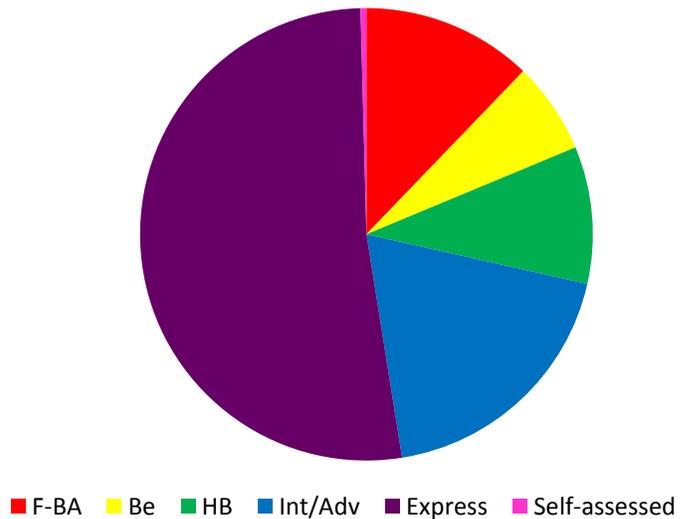
- **72%** of participants were Economic immigrants (including **67%** Provincial Nominees), **16%** were refugees, and **11%** were Family Class (Fig 3).

**Figure 3 - Immigration Categories**



- **818** newcomers got their first Canadian ‘work experience’ as volunteers in the Entry Program. Each one received a letter of reference to use in their job search.
- **118** freelance interpreters and **63** volunteers provided interpretation services in **37** languages for Entry Program students at the Foundations/Basic (F-Ba), Beginner (Be) and High Beginner (HB) levels of English proficiency (Fig 4).
- **29%** of EP participants benefitted from interpretation services.

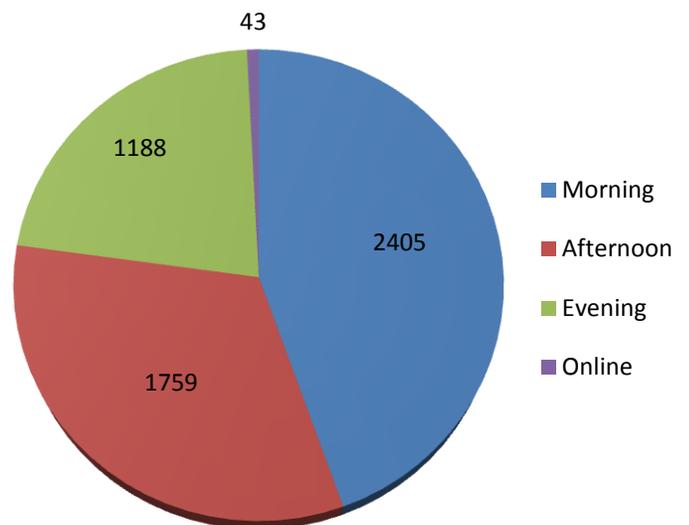
**Figure 4 - Students by English Level**



**Entry Program Online:**

- **43** students completed Entry Program Online from November 2015 to March 2016 (Fig 5).
- Online modules were translated into French and revised to be relevant for newcomers settling anywhere in Manitoba.

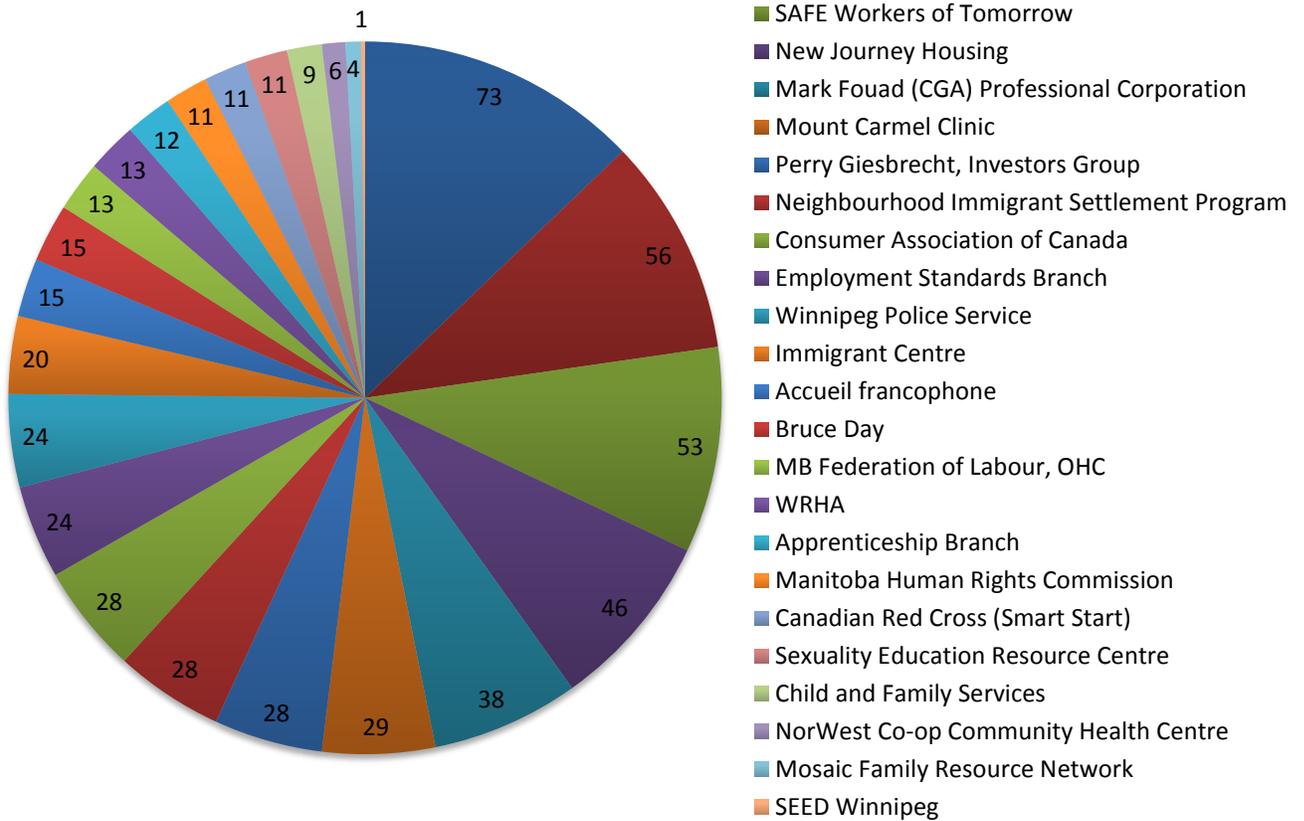
**Figure 5 - Student Enrolment per Session**



**Contributing Agencies:**

- **24** agencies participated in our Guest Speaker series, including settlement and mainstream NGOs, private enterprise, municipal and provincial government departments (Fig 6).
- A total of **568** presentations were delivered by **75** presenters (Fig 6, below).

**Figure 6 - Guest Speaker Presentations**

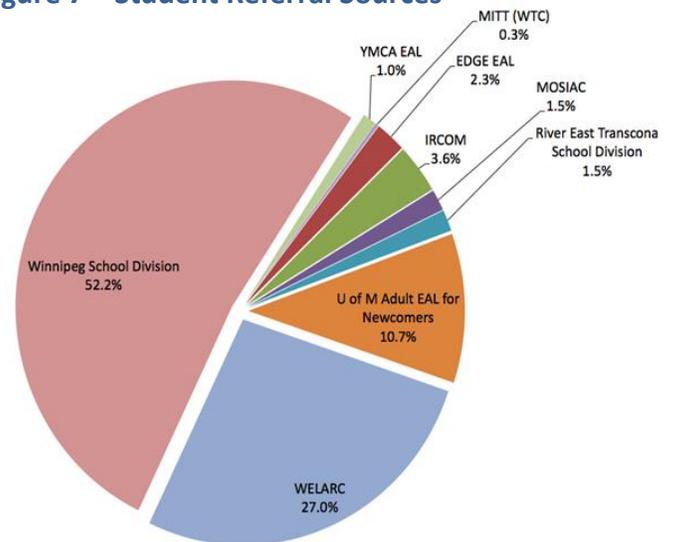


**Living English:**

The Living English (LE) summer English as an Additional Language (EAL) program is held at the Red River College downtown campus. For the past 8 years it has provided activity-based language classes for adults, focusing on the needs of newcomers with the most limited language and literacy skills. Coordinators work collaboratively with other EAL programs to register low-level learners from Foundations to CLB 4 (Fig 7). Learners practice English in authentic situations during weekly outings in the community, and the program serves as a supportive training ground for new EAL teachers.

LE 2015 was characterized by the strong personal, cross-cultural and community bonds that were formed, and the eagerness of teachers and students to apply new skills. Newly certified EAL teachers spent time together

**Figure 7 – Student Referral Sources**



planning lessons and outings, reflecting on and developing their professional skills. Learners made community connections, many of which remain strong to this day. For example, after visiting Siloam Mission on a class outing, one woman from Congo began to volunteer in the kitchen where she continues to work every Saturday.

Quick facts about LE 2015:

- **393** clients applied
- **10** were referred to other ESL programs
- **115** clients remained on the waitlist
- **52** were no-shows (invited but never came)
- **49** clients withdrew before the end
- **177** completed the program

Of the **226** clients who attended the program:

- **135** were women, **88** were men
- Students were between the ages of 19 and 70

- Top Source Countries:

- Eritrea: 18%
- Somalia: 12%
- Bhutan: 10%
- Ethiopia: 9%
- Congo: 8%
- Tanzania: 4%
- Other countries: 39%

- Canadian Language Benchmark Levels:

- Foundations = 18
- Literacy Phase 1 = 50
- Literacy Phase 2 = 43
- CLB1 = 13
- CLB2 = 20
- CLB3 = 23
- CLB4 = 30
- CLB4/5 = 29

Figure 8 – Client Registration Results

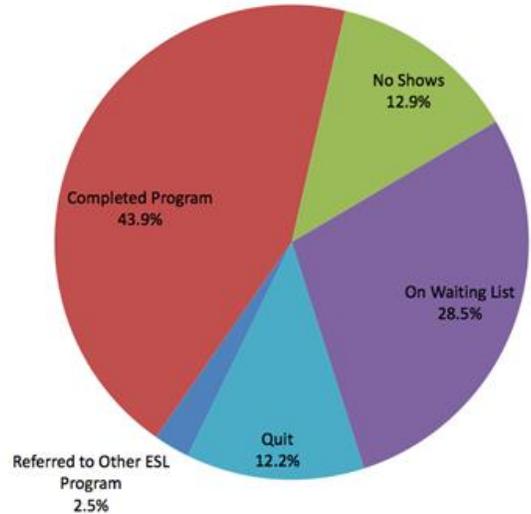


Figure 9 – Reasons for Early Withdrawal

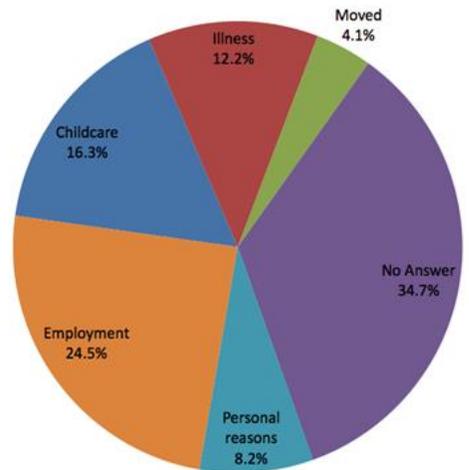
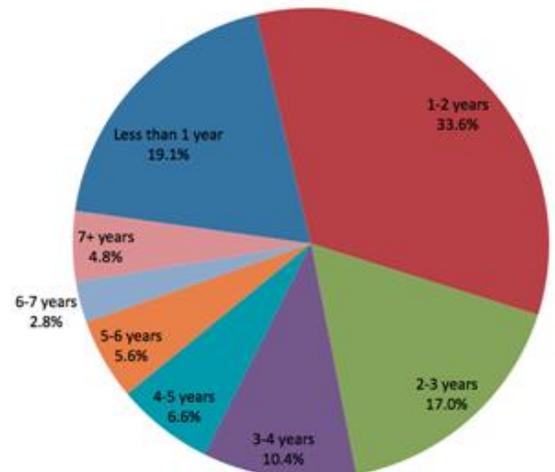


Figure 10 – Length of Time in Canada



### **Settlement Online Pre-Arrival:**

In September AMI signed a 2-year agreement with the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), the project lead for the national Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) program. SOPA is an online hub providing guidance and personalized pre-employment supports for immigrants destined to Canada. Clients register from overseas and are connected with an Intake Counsellor in their province of destination. The Intake Counsellor helps them develop a settlement plan, provides information and referral to local agencies, and registers the client for courses that meet the person's identified needs. SOPA facilitators deliver the following online courses to prepare immigrants for successful integration into the labour market:

- Job Search Strategies
- Working in Canada
- Professional Communication
- Working with Others
- Canadian Workplace Integration

Our SOPA team works closely with the following partners who deliver the same suite of services to immigrants destined to their province or region.

- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) - Atlantic Region
- Catholic Centre for Immigrants / World Skills Employment Centre - Ontario
- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society - Alberta
- Regina Open Door Society - Saskatchewan
- MOSAIC - British Columbia

A total of 147 pre-arrival clients registered with SOPA from October 2015 to March 2016, and 110 completed a needs assessment with the Intake Counsellor. The rest were either ineligible or did not access further services. To date, about 46 SOPA clients have arrived in Manitoba and 22 completed the Entry Program.

### **OUR PLACE IN THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS**

AMI is an integral part of Winnipeg's Centralized intake Services model, comprised of Manitoba Start, AMI/Entry Program and Winnipeg English Language Assessment & Referral Centre (WELARC). Winnipeg School Division's EAL classes are located in the same block as well, so newcomers are able to access a wide range of services in one central location. Now that AMI provides pre-arrival services, the available range of supports for immigrants has expanded even further.

1. Visa-ready immigrants are now able to register for SOPA and receive pre-arrival information, referral and employment-related services online.
2. Newcomers go through intake at Manitoba Start, where they are connected with an employment coach, and registered for settlement orientation at the Entry Program.
3. AMI/Entry Program books appointments with WELARC for clients who need EAL classes.
4. WELARC assesses learners' language and refers them to EAL classes, including referrals to the Living English summer EAL program.

## CHALLENGES

Never has the collaborative will of the settlement sector been more evident than when agencies worked together to manage the influx of 928 Syrian refugees in early 2016. The Provincial government organized weekly cross-sectoral meetings with 'front door' service providers to refine client intake and referral processes, and IRCC held weekly teleconference meetings to gather and give updates on the Syrian Initiative.

AMI had enough funds in our Contribution Agreement with IRCC to hire more staff, translate and develop materials in Arabic for a special 'Arabic Express' class, and furnish and rent additional space in the building. Even though many of us worked 12-14 hour days and weekends with no extra pay, the ability to respond quickly to emerging needs was inspiring.

It was a shock when IRCC de-committed funds from our budget in mid-February, without warning, when we were at the peak of Syrian enrolment. After jumping to fulfill the federal government's time-sensitive demands, it was demoralizing for the entire staff when we had to lay off people we had just hired, many of whom had left jobs or turned down other offers to work with us.

## LOOKING AHEAD

For 2016-2017, IRCC has provided AMI with \$1,676,727 to continue delivering the Entry Program and Living English. Of this amount, \$171,372 is earmarked for programming that supports Syrian refugees. Because of the recent influx of large families, the Living English program will be expanding this summer to include EAL classes for school age children (6-12) and youth (ages 13-18), in addition to an increased number of classes for adults.

We have also received \$10,000 from the Red Cross and \$1,000 from the Spence Neighbourhood Association which we will use to fill identified gaps in our programming needs. Red Cross funds will be used to a) provide childminding for the Living English program so that families with many children can attend classes in one convenient location, and b) organize family field trips and outdoor activities for Entry Program participants. Spence Neighbourhood funds will be used to purchase healthy snacks and supplies for the Living English childminding program.

We expect to negotiate new 3-year agreements with IRCC in the near future for the 2017-2020 funding period, based on proposals we submitted in 2015. We are thankful for the on-going support of the federal government, as it demonstrates the value that Canada places on immigrants and refugees, and their successful integration in, and contribution to our society.

