

## Chapter 16

# Economy – Co-ordinating English-Language Programs

### 1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of the Economy has improved the co-ordination of its English-language programs. At February 2017, the Ministry had implemented two of its five recommendations. It has set and is using targets to enable it to evaluate the success of its English-language programs.

The Ministry needs to:

- › Update its method to assess demand for provincially funded English-language programs
- › Sign agreements with regional colleges for the delivery of English-language programs and assess whether regional colleges meet its expectations

The overall goal of English-language programs is to help new immigrants integrate into Saskatchewan life and secure employment. Both federally and provincially funded English-language programs for immigrants exist in Saskatchewan to give immigrants over the age of 18 the opportunity to gain or improve their English-language skills. These programs are provided at no charge to immigrants.

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes our follow up of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2015.

In 2015, we assessed the Ministry's processes to co-ordinate English-language programs. Our *2015 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 8 concluded that the Ministry of the Economy had, other than for the matters identified, effective processes for co-ordinating English-language programs that assist in employment and settlement of recent immigrants over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan. We made five recommendations.

In 2015-16, the Ministry provided about \$2.66 million for English-language programming, this included \$1.66 million to various non-government agencies and \$672 thousand<sup>1</sup> to regional colleges. The 2016-17 budget was \$3.48 million; this included \$2.81 million to various non-government agencies and \$672 thousand<sup>2</sup> to regional colleges.

To conduct this review engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry's management agreed with the criteria.

<sup>1</sup> Order in Council 298/2015 – funding to regional colleges for English as a second language.

<sup>2</sup> Order in Council 231/2016 and 323/2016 – funding to regional colleges for English as a second language.



## 3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at January 26, 2017, and the Ministry's actions up to that date. We found that the Ministry has implemented two recommendations but requires more work to implement the remaining three recommendations.

### 3.1 Progress Noted in Forecasting Needs for English-Language Programs

We recommended that the Ministry of the Economy develop a formal methodology, including regional analysis, for assessing the demand for English-language program needs. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

**Status** – Partially Implemented

The Ministry is developing a documented needs methodology to help identify when a community should receive classroom-based English-language instruction. It currently uses various data such as immigration data and regional analysis. It is starting to include other variables in its methodology such as number of students. It expects to complete the update of its methodology in spring 2017.

In addition, the Ministry is piloting online English-language training for individuals whose language ability is above a certain level.

Periodic reviews of existing methodologies help identify opportunities to make refinements. Having current documented methodologies facilitate consistently analyzing needs each year, and meeting regional English-language program needs.

We recommended that the Ministry of the Economy obtain information on federally-funded English-language programs to facilitate decisions on the nature and location of provincially-funded English-language programs. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

**Status** – Implemented

In addition to using the updated needs methodology, Ministry employees have bi-weekly discussions with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on English-language programming and various other programs. These informal meetings may also include officials from regional colleges.

The Ministry recognizes not everyone who needs language training is eligible for the federal language training programs. At February 2017, the Ministry had made decisions for 2017-18 funding in conjunction with IRCC.

IRCC spends approximately three times as much on language training in Saskatchewan as compared to the Ministry. The Ministry needs information such as utilization of existing programs and planned changes to federally-funded programs to make decisions about the nature, extent, and location of provincially-funded English-language programs. Having current information helps ensure the Ministry does not duplicate federal programming and focuses its programming in un- or under-serviced areas.

### 3.2 Measureable Targets Selected

We recommended that the Ministry of the Economy select specific and measurable targets related to performance indicators for its English-language programs to monitor the effectiveness of delivery of the programs. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

**Status** – Implemented

The Ministry has set targets to enable it to evaluate the success of its English-language programs. Its targets included percentage of students with learning goals, student attendance, and number of available spaces in classes. The Ministry receives information from the service providers quarterly and then assesses this against the targets. The Ministry plans to initiate discussions with service providers when results are below expectations.

Setting targets helps the Ministry decide how much it plans to achieve by when. This in turn helps the Ministry determine the necessary resources to deliver its English-language training programs.

### 3.3 Agreements with Regional Colleges Needed to Enable Monitoring of Program Delivery

We recommended that the Ministry of the Economy sign agreements for the delivery of English-language programs with regional colleges that deliver these programs. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

**Status** – Partially Implemented

In 2015-16, the Ministry started using funding letters for the regional colleges' delivery of the English-language programs. The funding letters include performance targets that it expects the regional colleges to achieve. However, the Ministry does not require the colleges to indicate that they understand or agree with those performance targets.

Lack of a written agreement increases the risk that regional colleges may not deliver English-language programs as expected by the Ministry.



We recommended that the Ministry of the Economy formally assess whether regional colleges that deliver English-language programs meet its expectations as set out in its Regional Colleges' policy manual. (2015 Report – Volume 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 15, 2016)

**Status** – Partially Implemented

As of January 2017, the Ministry was reviewing its English-language programs. It expected this review to include assessing whether regional colleges meet expectations. The Ministry expected to complete this review by April 2017.

Not actively monitoring and assessing whether the regional colleges' English-language programs meet its expectations means the Ministry does not know if its annual program funding of about \$670 thousand achieves its expected results.