



THE SETTLEMENT AND  
INTEGRATION NEEDS OF  
**FRANCOPHONE LGBTQIA**  
**IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**  
IN ONTARIO

Needs assessment report

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Between March and December 2014, FrancoQueer and OCASI - the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants worked collaboratively on an assessment of the settlement and integration needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in Ontario.*

The assessment revealed an urgent need for French-language information and welcoming services to support Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees' settlement and integration in Ontario.

## Terminology

In the context of this needs assessment, the term “immigrant and refugee persons” also includes refugee claimants, people without status, visitors, temporary migrant workers and international students who wish to settle in Canada.

The acronym LGBTQIA includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people.

## Methodology

The needs assessment aimed to respond to two main questions:

- What are the settlement and integration needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees?
- What kinds of services could meet those needs?

The needs assessment relied exclusively on confidential survey questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with immigrants, refugees and practitioners who work with them. A brief literature review revealed the absence of work on this specific topic. Therefore, we decided not to use literature review as a data-gathering tool in this study. While we did note the existence of some good practices during the needs assessment, we did not research these practices and their ability to respond to the target population's needs. Such a task fell outside of the research framework.

A total of 34 individuals filled out the immigrants/refugees' survey questionnaire and 33 people filled out the practitioners' questionnaire. Nineteen immigrants and refugees and 27 practitioners participated in interviews or focus groups. Most of these participants were from central Ontario but others, in smaller numbers, were from other regions in the province.

## Needs Assessment Results

The three major needs among Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees identified by this assessment were (1) the need to access French-language settlement and integration services that are open to their LGBTQIA identities and that take it into consideration, i.e. services offered in "positive spaces", (2) the need to meet other LGBTQIA people and (3) the need to be included within their various communities, including the Francophone, LGBTQIA and ethno-cultural or country of origin communities.

More specifically, in regards to settlement and integration services, the needs assessment showed that the two greatest needs are housing and employment. The other main needs identified included immigration concerns, health and mental health, social/spiritual/religious

life, language instruction, French-language services and knowledge about one's rights. Such needs are similar to those of Francophone immigrants and refugees in general. However, LGBTQIA individuals face greater barriers when trying to access services that can help them meet such needs.

Indeed, we noticed several challenges facing this clientele in the context of currently available French-language settlement and integration services in Ontario. Such challenges include the low number of French-language services that are truly welcoming towards these clients and capable of responding to their particular needs, that is to say, French-language services offered in "positive spaces" which are comprised of three key elements:

- Inclusive language and signage.
- The commitment to challenging homo-bi-trans-phobia and dismantling heterosexism.
- An understanding of LGBTQIA people's needs and realities and a proactive approach to responding to them.

We take note as well of the lack of promotion of such existing, scarce yet crucial, services. Homo-bi-trans-phobia is also a serious issue within the settlement sector and Francophone and/or ethno-cultural activities in Ontario, with the result that LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees fear disclosing their identity and remain invisible. Finally, the lack of French-language training for practitioners on LGBTQIA issues and on other forms of cultural competency leads to the perpetuation of such challenges.

In order to respond to these needs, the needs assessment revealed that the two most useful forms of services to be developed would be (1) general settlement and integration services that are open to LGBTQIA identities and that take them into consideration and (2) specialized services offered by agencies and/or practitioners that have specific knowledge on LGBTQIA issues. Such services should be offered in French, by people who are culturally competent and who have been trained in the areas of information, accompaniment and referrals.

## Recommendations

In light of the needs assessment results, FrancoQueer and OCASI elaborated five main recommendations:

- Offering trainings on LGBTQIA issues in the field of settlement.
- Development of French-language settlement and integration services tailored to LGBTQIA people.
- Development of a province-wide support network for practitioners who serve this clientele.
- Improving the promotion of existing services and promote future services.
- Funding the development of the structure and governance needed to serve LGBTQIA people.

We hope that this needs assessment report will elicit a collective engagement to mobilize the necessary resources to implement these recommendations.



# INTRODUCTION

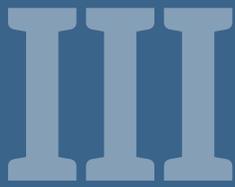
*In Ontario, there is only a limited number of projects related to Francophone sexual minorities. No studies have been conducted on the topic of Francophone immigrants and refugees who belong to these groups.*

The present needs assessment is the first-ever effort of this kind in the province. It should be noted as well that FrancoQueer is the first and only not-for-profit provincial association with the mandate to convene, represent and serve Francophone sexual minorities, including immigrant and refugee individuals who belong to this community. This organization was founded in 2006, almost 10 years ago. In light of such a recent history, there's a great deal of potential for development in the area of supports for Francophone sexual minorities, and more precisely for the immigrants and refugees who are a part of them. However, this type of development requires collective engagement as well as resources.

In view of eliciting such an engagement and identifying the best use of public resources to support Francophone sexual minorities, FrancoQueer and OCASI - the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants selected a priority target population: Francophone immigrant and refugee individuals who belong to sexual minorities in Ontario. Since 2006, FrancoQueer has met roughly one hundred (100) individuals who were looking for a Francophone LGBTQIA host community, as well as services and referrals. Most of them were originally from Congo, Cameroon, France, Senegal and other Francophone countries in Europe, Africa and the Caribbean, Asia and South America. Both women and men have contacted the organization and obtained help - only one woman had a dependent child with her. The organization has noticed a large number of specific barriers facing members of this target population in the context of their settlement when they arrive in Ontario, and in their longer-term integration in the province.

## Introduction

Our needs assessment aims, therefore, to better describe their needs and the services required to respond to them. This report presents the context of Francophone immigration, Francophone sexual minorities and homo-bi-trans-phobia. Then it presents the needs assessment methodology and its results, and it finishes with recommendations. We hope that the report will be instrumental in raising awareness among the public and agencies' staff about issues pertaining to Francophone sexual minorities in Ontario – and that it will lead to other research projects about these communities.



# THE CONTEXT: FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION, FRANCOPHONE SEXUAL MINORITIES AND HOMO-BI-TRANS-PHOBIA

## Francophone Immigration

*Between 2004 and 2013, roughly 2,532,161 individuals became permanent residents in Canada, including economic immigrants, sponsored family members and refugees<sup>1</sup>.*

Among these immigrants, 3.6% or 91,279 persons declared French as their mother tongue<sup>2</sup>, while 5.5% or 140,344 persons declared French as the only Canadian official language they spoke<sup>3</sup>.

Over the same period, a large percentage of new permanent residents (45.1% or 1,140,775 individuals) settled in Ontario, though the proportion declined with time, from 53% in 2004 to 39.9% in 2013<sup>4</sup>. Of these, the majority settled in Toronto (78.6%)<sup>5</sup>. Between 2004 and 2013, 1.2% of new permanent residents in Ontario (14,015 individuals) declared French as the only Canadian official language they spoke, and 3.9% (45,512 individuals) said they spoke both French and English<sup>6</sup>.

Launched November 2012, Ontario's new Immigration Strategy set a target of 5% Francophone immigration. This goal is in line with the federal government's goal, which is also 5% Francophone immigration outside of Quebec. The Ontario government tabled *Bill 49, Ontario Immigration Act<sup>7</sup>*, which aims to facilitate and strengthen immigrant selection and settlement. Its adoption will support the government's engagement to enable the Francophone community to fully benefit from the province's strategy by attracting, welcoming and integrating new Francophone immigrants.

## Immigrant and Refugee Francophone Sexual Minorities and Homo-Bi-Trans-Phobia

*Ontario's Francophone sexual minorities comprise French-speaking lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) individuals who live in Ontario.*

These individuals have diverse cultural backgrounds and often use a different terminology from the one we use in this report to describe their sexual or gender identity and their sexual orientation. Some of them were born in Ontario, others in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada. Many were born abroad and later immigrated to Canada. Among Ontario's Francophone sexual minorities who were born abroad, there are individuals from various countries of origin, including France and other Francophone countries in Europe, in the Middle East and various countries in Francophone Africa. Thus, it is a population marked by a wide cultural diversity.

Just like non-Francophone sexual minorities in the province, Ontario's Francophone sexual minorities are sometimes well accepted in their circles when it comes to their sexual

or gender identity and their sexual orientation. However, they can also be affected by homophobia, biphobia or transphobia – which we will shorten in this document as homo-bi-trans-phobia. This means that people in their circles do not accept their sexual or gender identity (transphobia) or their sexual orientation (homophobia or biphobia). They may then be the target of hateful behaviour from such people, including rejection from their family or community, public scorn, being the object of gossip, experiencing discrimination in the areas of housing, employment or others – even psychological, sexual, physical or other types of violence. This phenomenon is similar to sexism or racism but it affects another part of a person’s identity. It is sometimes also a matter of heterosexism, i.e. attitudes and behaviour that demonstrate a preference, at the individual or systemic levels, for sexuality and relationships that involve exclusively people of the opposite sex. Heterosexism also includes the assumption that others are heterosexual or that only relationships involving people of the opposite sex constitute the acceptable norm. Such experiences of homo-bi-trans-phobia and heterosexism, or the fear of them, often lead members of sexual minorities to hide their identity or “remain in the closet” – and to not fully thrive as individuals, in addition to experiencing negative health consequences.

Francophone immigrant and refugee LGBTQIA people have multifaceted identities, facing barriers linked to each dimension of their identities and the corresponding cumulative and intersectional effects. In addition to homo-bi-trans-phobia and heterosexism, Ontario’s Francophone sexual minorities may experience difficulties as Francophones in Ontario, such as the lack of French-language services. When such members of Francophone sexual minorities are also immigrants or refugees, they may also face immigration-related challenges in Ontario. When they are racialized, they may face racism-related challenges. Furthermore, they may have experienced homo-bi-trans-phobia in their country of origin and continue to experience it within various communities in Ontario, including within their own ethno-cultural or country-of-origin communities. These different layers of challenges make immigrant and refugee Francophone sexual minorities’ settlement and integration in Ontario more complicated than it is for other immigrants and refugees.

This report offers examples of the difficulties experienced by immigrant and refugee Francophone sexual minorities in Ontario. They include examples of the difficulty to find appropriate social housing when people fear to disclose that they live with a same-sex partner. This leads to being considered as a person that lives with a roommate and who needs housing with more than one bedroom, which is difficult to obtain. There is also the difficulty in keeping a job when a person suffers the detrimental mental health effects of

isolation as an immigrant, Francophone, gay person. Lastly, we will provide examples of homo-bi-trans-phobia in the context of settlement services, such as inappropriate comments made by learners or teachers in language courses. All these examples will provide a greater understanding of the realities facing immigrant and refugee Francophone sexual minorities and help identify various ways to respond to their needs.

To summarize, unfortunately homo-bi-transphobia and heterosexism are an enduring phenomenon. As a result, numerous people do not disclose their identity and thus they remain invisible among the larger immigrant and refugee population. To complicate things further, very little research has been conducted on immigrant and refugee Francophone sexual minorities. Thus, there are no precise statistical data on people who belong to such a group.

That said, we know that since 2006 FrancoQueer has been in touch with roughly one hundred (100) individuals of such a population who live mainly in Toronto but in other places across Ontario as well, including 14 Toronto residents who attended FrancoQueer's support group between 2012 and 2014. In the context of the present needs assessment, FrancoQueer and OCASI were in touch with roughly 60 people belonging to this group - and who responded to the survey questionnaire or participated in a focus group. There are no government statistics on the numbers of LGBTQIA people, but a national survey by Forum Research suggests that sexual minorities constitute about 5% of the Canadian population, but the rate of self-identification varies according age, revenue, gender and religion. For instance, 11% of youth 18 to 34 years old identify as LGBTQIA<sup>8</sup>.

Given the Forum Research's conclusions, the immigrant and refugee French-speaking LGBTQIA population that arrived in Ontario between 2004 and 2013 could include somewhere between 2,976 (5%) and 5,952 (10%) individuals. A significant number of immigrants and refugees could thus benefit from French-language, LGBTQIA-appropriate settlement services. However, the decision to develop services for this group should not depend exclusively on numbers. It should be grounded on the need for settlement and integration services as experienced by immigrant and refugee Francophone LGBTQIA individuals and demonstrated by research such as this needs assessment. The development of such services would also constitute a matter of accountability regarding the fight against the various forms of discrimination experienced by this group, whether as Francophones, immigrants/refugees or LGBTQIA people.

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<sup>1</sup> Facts and figures 2013 – Permanent residents by gender and category, 1989 to 2013, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/01.asp>.

<sup>2</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2013, Permanent residents by top languages reported as mother tongue, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/21.asp>.

<sup>3</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2013, Permanent residents by category and language ability, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/20.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2013, Permanent residents by province or territory and urban area, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/11.asp>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2013, Permanent residents by province or territory and language ability, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/13.asp>.

<sup>7</sup> Bill 49, Ontario Immigration Act, 2015, on line: [http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills\\_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=3084&detailPage=bills\\_detail\\_the\\_bill](http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=3084&detailPage=bills_detail_the_bill).

<sup>8</sup> “News Release: One twentieth of Canadians claim to be LGBT,” 28 June 2012, on line: [www.forumresearch.com/forms/News%20Archives/News%20Releases/67741\\_Canada-wide\\_-\\_Federal\\_LGBT\\_\(Forum\\_Research\)\\_\(20120628\).pdf](http://www.forumresearch.com/forms/News%20Archives/News%20Releases/67741_Canada-wide_-_Federal_LGBT_(Forum_Research)_(20120628).pdf).

# IV

## METHODOLOGY

*This needs assessment was conducted between March and December 2014.*

It aimed to respond to two main questions :

- What are the settlement and integration needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees?
- What kinds of services could meet such needs?

In the context of this needs assessment, the term “immigrant and refugee individuals” also includes asylum seekers, people without status, visitors, temporary migrant workers and international students who wish to settle in Canada. As mentioned previously, the acronym “LGBTQIA” includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people.

The needs assessment relied exclusively on confidential survey questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with immigrants, refugees and practitioners who work with them. A brief literature review revealed the absence of work on this specific topic. Therefore an analysis of source documents is not a part of this study.

The two lead researchers of this study were Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and Research Coordinator and Julie Lassonde, a lawyer and consultant whose services were hired by FrancoQueer. The project as a whole was supervised by a management team comprising the two researchers plus Eta Woldeab, OCASI Associate Executive Director, and a representative from the FrancoQueer board, a role played in rotation by Gabrielle Loesch, Luis Fonseca and Ronald Dieleman.

An advisory committee comprising community practitioners and an academic with knowledge of the Francophone community and LGBTQIA issues provided advice to the research team throughout the needs assessment. The advisory committee members were:

- Dr. Alexandre Brassard, Director of Research, contractual professor and Coordinator of the Centre for Global Challenges, Glendon University College;
- Gisèle Hauser, French-Language Mental Health and Addiction Services System Navigator, Addiction Services of Thames Valley;
- Malika Séguin-Gervais, Project Officer, Francophone Immigration Support Network for Eastern Ontario;
- Carline Zamar, Community Outreach Officer, Collège Boréal.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the needs assessment participants, we do not mention the cities where they live or work. Instead, we reference the following regions:

- Centre: Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton;
- East: Barrie, Bradford, Durham Region, Peterborough, York Region, Belleville, Kingston, Ottawa;
- West: Chatham, Leamington, London, Sarnia, Windsor-Essex, Brantford, Fort Erie, Guelph, Hamilton, Kitchener, Niagara, Welland;
- North: Kenora, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay.

## Survey Questionnaires

*We conducted two confidential surveys: (1) with immigrants and refugees and (2) with practitioners.*

The survey of immigrants and refugees was conducted both in electronic and hard copy (paper) format. Some participants, who had difficulty with reading and writing, were helped in filling out the printed questionnaire. It is possible that some individuals did not respond to the survey given their low literacy levels. The second survey questionnaire was conducted

electronically only. The survey questionnaires were available for responses between May 25 and July 18, 2014. Invitations to participate were sent out via the email lists of FrancoQueer, Action Positive VIH/Sida, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, OCASI (including the email lists of projects such as the Positive Spaces Initiative/Initiative Espaces positifs, Établissement.org and SecteurÉtablissement.org) and the Centre for Excellence in Research in Immigration and Settlement (CERIS).

## Immigrants and Refugees Survey

The immigrants and refugees' survey included 44 questions covering the following topics:

- Demographics
- Settlement and integration needs
- Challenges faced in the context of the settlement and integration process
- Use of settlement and integration services and level of satisfaction with such services
- Impact of sexual orientation and gender identity on access to, and quality of, services
- Degree of openness towards Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees within Francophone, LGBTQIA and ethno-cultural communities

In spite of the fact that 56 people responded to the survey questionnaire (45 online and 11 printed), we retained a final sample of 34 respondents, which allowed us to reach our goal of 30 survey respondents. We disqualified incomplete or mistaken questionnaires following several criteria:

- Questionnaires that were abandoned before question 23, i.e. before the end of the questions on demographics.
- Questionnaires filled by respondents who indicated residence in a city outside of Ontario.
- Questionnaires filled by respondents who identified as heterosexuals but who did not identify as transgender or did not indicate having experienced issues, challenges or needs because they belong to the LGBTQIA community.

The consent form, at the beginning of the questionnaire, clearly mentioned the target population – Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees. The fact that certain individuals did not understand the eligibility criterion for the survey leads us to conclude

that they may not have read the consent form properly and/or that not all of the respondents were familiar with the terms “lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) individuals”. This also leads us to recognize the importance of including an additional question in the first third of future questionnaires that reminds respondents what the target population is – which would allow us to sort out people who are not eligible to fill out the survey questionnaire.

The basic profile of the respondents to the immigrants/refugees’ questionnaire was as follows:

- **Refugee v. non-refugee:** 56% of respondents arrived in Canada as asylum seekers or government-sponsored refugees – or as visitors or international students that subsequently filed an asylum application<sup>9</sup>.
  
- **Language:**
  - All respondents but one reported French as their first (73%) or second (24%) language. For the sole respondent who did not, French was their fourth language.
  - Regarding spoken French, 85% of respondents reported an advanced level, while 9% reported an intermediate level and 6% a basic level.
  - Regarding spoken English, 40% reported an advanced level, while 36% reported an intermediate level and 6% no skills at all.
  
- **Length of stay in Canada:** 70% were in Canada for 4 years or less, while 18% declared residing here “between 5 and 9 years” and 12%, for “more than 10 years”.
  
- **Geographic location:** 66% live in Toronto, while the rest live in Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Hamilton, Ajax, Mississauga or London.
  
- **Age:** 82% are between 25 and 54 years old, 12% are between 15 and 25 years old and 6% are 55 years of age or older.
  
- **Race:** respondents who identified as black were the larger group at 62% of all respondents, and made up 95% of the refugee respondents.
  
- **Sexual and gender identity:**
  - 52% of all respondents identified as men.
  - 49% of all respondents identified as women.

## Methodology

- 12% of all respondents (4 respondents) identified otherwise, as transgender, trans men, genderqueer or two-spirited.
  - 50% of refugee respondents identified as women.
  - Respondents were able to choose multiple descriptions of their sexual orientations: thus 47% identified as gay, 19% as men who have sex with men, 16% identified as lesbian, 13% as bisexual, 13% as heterosexual, 6% as questioning, 6% as queer, 3% identified as two-spirit and 3% as pansexual.
- 
- **Education:** 18% had education levels equivalent to high school, 3% had completed a technical training program, 6% had a college degree, 32% a bachelor's degree, 29% a master's degree, 9% a diploma for a regulated profession and 3% a PhD degree.
- 
- **Employment and studies:** 38% of respondents were unemployed job seekers, 47% were employed, either part-time or full-time and 30% were students, either part-time or full-time. Four of the full-time students were also among the unemployed respondents seeking a job.

## Practitioners Survey

The practitioners survey questionnaire comprised 22 questions on the following topics:

- Demographics;
- Experience serving LGBTQIA clientele;
- Internal processes in place for services to LGBTQIA clientele, including internal policies;
- Perception of LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees' needs and challenges.

The survey was open to any person offering settlement and integration services to Francophone immigrants and refugees in Ontario. It was not a requirement to have previously served LGBTQIA clients.

Although 47 people responded to the questionnaire, the final sample comprised 33 respondents. We discarded surveys abandoned before question 8, i.e. the end of the section covering demographic information. We attained our goal of 30 respondents to this survey.

The profile of survey respondents was as follows:

- **Language of service provision in your organization/your work/your volunteering:**
  - 55% declared offering services exclusively in French
  - 30% declared offering services mainly in French
  - 15% declared offering services mainly in English but also in French
- **Geographic location:**
  - 36% were in Toronto
  - 24% in the Ottawa/Kingston region
  - The rest, elsewhere in the province
- **Position:**
  - 53% frontline workers
  - 22% coordinators/managers
  - The rest were executive directors (9%) or selected the category “other” (16%) (e.g. consultants, development officers or project officers).
- **LGBTQIA services:**
  - 22% indicated their organization offers specialized services to LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees
  - 42% mentioned they have previously served an LGBTQIA client
  - N.B.: these two percentages correspond to responses to two different survey questions, which explains why they don't add up to 100%.

## Interviews and Focus Groups

We held 18 individual interviews (16 in French, 2 in English), 2 focus groups with 2 participants (in French) and 5 focus groups with between 4 and 10 participants (4 in French, 1 in English).

### Immigrants and Refugees

It was difficult to recruit Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees. We had planned to hold 8 focus groups with 4 to 8 participants, for a total of 32 to 64 participants. However, only 19 Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees participated.

At the onset of interviews and focus groups, we asked participants to introduce themselves and mention their country of origin and for how long they have been in Ontario. We did not ask them demographic questions such as their age, but we noted there was very little presence of youth 15 to 24 years old. The recruitment process informed us about participants' place of residence in Ontario. The majority lived in central Ontario, with others living in the east, west and north regions of the province.

We believe that the difficulty in recruiting participants is a result of the fact that the Francophone LGBTQIA immigrant and refugee community is a minority and fragmented community. Indeed, there are scarce mechanisms to gather them together. We believe that recruiting participants was also difficult because, as explained previously, such individuals may not identify as LGBTQIA people when they seek services. Furthermore, the practitioners who know LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees do not always feel at ease to invite them to take part in an assessment like this one, since their relations with such individuals are not sufficiently developed to do so. Indeed, practitioners are often in touch with them informally and without their organization's support. The context in which they work often does not allow them to establish trustful, ongoing links as they serve such a clientele.

## Practitioners

A total of 27 practitioners participated in an interview or a focus group (21 Francophone and 6 Anglophone practitioners). As was the case for the immigrant and refugee participants, the majority of practitioners were from central Ontario, with others from the east, west and north regions of the province.

We also held a focus group with 4 leaders of Francophone ethno-cultural communities and Francophone practitioners who belong to such communities but who had not necessarily served LGBTQIA clients in the past or were not necessarily familiar with LGBTQIA issues. By ethno-cultural communities we mean communities associated with the cultures of origin of Francophone LGBTQIA people in Ontario. This allowed us to better understand how LGBTQIA people are perceived and the degree of inclusion within their families and ethno-cultural communities.

## Summary

A total of 67 individuals participated as survey questionnaire respondents and 46 participated in the context of interviews or focus groups. We should mention that 4 individuals participated in two interviews – as immigrants or refugees and then as practitioners. The survey questionnaires were anonymous. On the other hand, some individuals who participated in an interview or a focus group voluntarily revealed they had also filled out the questionnaire. Thus, we believe that several persons participated through both assessment means. Therefore we estimate that OCASI and FrancoQueer succeeded in reaching approximately 60 people across the province who were sufficiently in touch with the Francophone LGBTQIA community to take part in this needs assessment.

Given the large extent of settlement services in Ontario, FrancoQueer’s limited resources to reach out and convene LGBTQIA Francophone people, and the fact that Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees tend not to disclose their identity when accessing services provided by organizations that do not self-identify as LGBTQIA organizations, we suspect that a great number of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrant and refugee individuals who live in Ontario are not in touch with the organizations that took part in recruitment efforts in the context of this needs assessment. Therefore our recommendations include creating “positive spaces” across the province and a provincial support network for practitioners already offering services to Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees. That would help a larger number of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees’ ease to access services.

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<sup>9</sup> In the context of this report, data associated to “refugees” correspond to the data linked to respondents who indicated having refugee or asylum seeker status either upon arrival or at the moment they responded to the survey questionnaire. A respondent may have been granted asylum or become an asylum seeker after having arrived in Canada with a different status (e.g. visitor or international student), and subsequently become a permanent resident and/or a citizen. Such a respondent would not be included in the data associated to “refugees” as the survey was not able to capture such intermediate statuses.



# NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

*As indicated in the previous section on methodology, the needs assessment results are based on survey questionnaires and interviews or focus groups with Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees and with practitioners. In this section, we present the results stemming from the entire data gathered. In order to respond to the needs assessment questions, we summarize the results under three categories: 1) needs, 2) challenges in the context of existing services and service gaps and 3) desired services.*

In order to respect participants' confidentiality, all information that would reveal an individual's identity has been removed from quotations. We chose to use the terms "immigrant", "refugee"<sup>10</sup> or "practitioner". As well, we refer only to the large regions of Ontario – the centre, the east, the west, the north – in order to avoid revealing participants' identities.

# Needs

*“I felt like I was a ten-year-old child who had to learn everything all over again.”*

*- An immigrant man in western Ontario*

Generally speaking, Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants' and refugees' settlement and integration needs are similar to those of other Francophone immigrants and refugees. However, they also have specific needs related to their LGBTQIA identities and they sometimes face problems when trying to access quality services, because organizations and practitioners are not always welcoming of LGBTQIA people or they lack knowledge in this area and thus do not have the capacity to adapt their services or the way they are offered to this clientele.

To begin, LGBTQIA Francophone immigrants and refugees need information on various settlement and integration topics but they experience difficulties trying to access such information. There is little information available online and in French about LGBTQIA-appropriate French-language settlement and integration services. They also need to know how to find information on a website and how to find services (who to call and how to go about it). Some individuals need to be accompanied and supported by a key person in their settlement and integration process. We should stress that, when designing services, it is important to take into account the special needs of immigrants and refugees who have undergone very little formal education (e.g., those who have low or no reading or writing skills). It is also important to strive to offer choices of services, i.e. more than one option.

The three main needs that this assessment identified among Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees are (1) accessing French-language settlement and integration services that are open to their LGBTQIA identities and that take them into account, i.e. services offered in “positive spaces”; (2) meeting LGBTQIA people; and (3) being included in their various communities.

## Settlement and Integration

In the area of settlement and integration, the research revealed that the two top needs are housing and employment. Following these, other main needs included: immigration support, health and mental health, social/spiritual/religious life, language skills learning, French-language services and knowledge about one's rights. However, the need that is more specific to LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees is to access (1) general settlement and integration services that are open to their LGBTQIA identities and that take them into account, i.e. services offered in "positive spaces"; and (2) specialized services offered by organizations and/or practitioners who have specific knowledge on LGBTQIA issues.

### Positive Spaces for LGBTQIA People

*"Talking about doctors, if there were a 'Positive Space' poster – that would help. That's not a lot, but I would feel more inclined to talk about such things. It creates a space of freedom that allows people to feel liberated more easily. At my doctor it was all rather 'traditional'. He asked me whether I was in a relationship and I said, 'yes' – and that was all. Had I seen an LGBT poster or something, I would have felt more inclined to speak out."*

- An immigrant man in central Ontario

The concept of a "Positive Space" does not refer to a physical location within an organization. It is rather a matter of attitudes, policy and practice, acceptance and acknowledgement (not just tolerance), safety and zero tolerance for homo-bi-trans-phobia. As defined in OCASI's "Positive Spaces" trainings<sup>11</sup>, a positive space comprises four elements:

- Using inclusive language
- Challenging homo-bi-trans-phobia
- Eliminating heterosexism
- Understanding and proactively addressing LGBTQIA needs and realities

During our interviews, the majority of practitioners, whether they were LGBTQIA immigrants themselves or not, mentioned the need for a "positive space" or welcoming

services for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees. LGBTQIA immigrant and refugee respondents did not often explicitly mention this need – but the need was evident when analyzing of their remarks. We believe this paradox to be the result of the fact that numerous immigrants and refugees do not expect to be able to disclose their identities - they fear doing it and have not had the experience of living their identities openly or accessing respectful services as LGBTQIA individuals. The experience of a “positive space” for many Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees is new to them.

*“When you just recently arrive here, you are still affected by what you experienced in your country of origin and you need psychological support. You need to feel accepted, supported, not judged. I think that’s... the main help one needs.”*

- A refugee man in central Ontario

The practitioner participants explained that immigrants and refugees do not disclose their sexual orientation when they try to access services. Responses to the immigrants and refugees’ survey questionnaire show that 56% among them never disclose their sexual orientation/gender or sexual identity when they seek to access settlement services and that 27% disclose it only sometimes or rarely, whereas only 17% always disclose their identities. Among the reasons why they do not disclose their identities:

- “My sexual orientation/gender or sexual identity is not their business.” (53%)
- “I did not feel at ease to talk about it.” (50%)
- “My service provider could have felt uncomfortable regarding my sexual orientation/gender or sexual identity.” (30%)

*“As long as you see there is acceptance, no taboo, that there’s openness, you feel more at ease. That’s how things work – whether you are an immigrant, Francophone – whatever. Whether you suffer from a mental disability or live with a physical disability, it’s exactly the same thing. If everyone talks about it and it’s not a taboo, you become more at ease.”*

- A practitioner in western Ontario

Disclosing one’s sexual or gender identity is not always necessary in view of receiving settlement and integration services that meet one’s needs. But in certain cases, e.g. if the

individual needs appropriate housing to live with their same-sex partner or if they are experiencing physical or mental health problems related to their LGBTQIA identity, it is crucial for this individual to feel safe to disclose their identity explicitly when accessing settlement and integration services. However, the important thing is that Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees feel at ease to disclose their identities if they so wish. They should be able to feel respected in all aspects of their identities in the context of their settlement services.

*“Some clients have asked me whether I am Muslim and what my opinion would be if they were, for instance, homosexual. I often find that people fear disclosing that before they know what your stance is, what your cultural background is – because they’ve had negative experiences. Thus, they want to know if they will be welcome.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

We found that many immigrants and refugees fear that their sexual or gender identity could be disclosed to their cultural community or community of origin – communities they often do not find to be welcoming to them. Some practitioners who belong to various ethno-cultural communities feel the mistrust that clients from their country of origin experience towards them. They wish their clients would give them the benefit of the doubt when it comes to their open-mindedness. However, we noticed that such practitioners do not always understand the scope of the risk associated with disclosing one’s sexual or gender identity, which includes rejection by their community, discrimination, violence, etc. Given the large number of members of various ethno-cultural communities who work in the area of settlement and integration, and the fact that many of these individuals lack knowledge on LGBTQIA issues, we conclude that there is a great deal of work to be done in regards to developing welcoming services for LGBTQIA people in this sector.

## Housing

Almost all LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees who participated in this research, no matter their financial standing or geographic location in Ontario, mentioned the difficulty of finding housing. Some of them started their search before arriving in Ontario, while the majority did so once they arrived here. Still, the difficulty in finding housing becomes an issue at the onset

of their settlement process. In the context of the immigrants and refugees' survey, the service "support to find housing" elicited the lowest satisfaction average of all services. Even when comparing responses by subgroups according to gender, geography and immigration status, this service is the one with which respondents are the least satisfied.

The following are some of the factors that explain this phenomenon, as identified during interviews and focus groups:

- Poor living conditions in housing units.
- Shock at finding oneself in a shelter, given the poor living conditions, violence and lack of awareness about LGBTQIA and Francophone identities.
- Unaffordable cost.
- Discrimination/racism towards black and Muslim people on the part of roommates and landlords.
- Not feeling at ease to disclose one's sexual orientation and mention one's couple relationship, which leads to looking for housing units made for roommates instead of for a couple.
- Bad quality of private support services to find housing.
- Difficulty finding a housing unit that meets one's needs.

## Employment

*"I remember this client. A colleague had initially served him. My colleague came to see me and he was of the same sexual orientation as the client – and maybe the client had talked to him. So he came to tell me that he had a client who was experiencing problems in his job search, etc. When I met the client, my colleague had advised me to talk about his sexual orientation. The client was perfectly bilingual, young, nice personality. Nothing indicated to me why he lost his job so often. I realized that the fact that he was gay and from a community where his family didn't accept his being gay – he had been expelled, he was emotionally fragile. It was in such a context that he would lose his job. He didn't have time to keep his job. He experienced problems, he was forced to move, it was a whole conflict... He was unable to become professionally stable."*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

Certain LGBTQIA people immigrate to Ontario for employment purposes. Others come to Ontario with their savings, or supported by their spouses. Many arrive in Ontario with very little financial means. Sooner or later, all of them strive to remain employed or to find their first job. Some individuals choose to study in order to increase their likeliness of finding employment. Some have to work illegally to survive.

Taking such a context into account, we noticed important information gaps regarding education and the labour market, employment support services, and the number of jobs available – the more so for Francophone individuals who have little knowledge of English. More specifically, the services needed by immigrants and refugees include support to adapt their resume to the specific expectations of a particular workplace, support to understand cultural differences and to gain credential recognition. The immigrants and refugees' survey revealed that they have low levels of satisfaction about employment-related services, especially outside of Toronto. Interviews and focus groups also showed that certain immigrants and refugees who experience psychological difficulties around their LGBTQIA identities find it hard to keep stable employment. Some undergo discrimination or harassment in the workplace, which also prevents them from accessing an acceptable workplace.

### **Immigration Support**

Refugees need more intensive services when it comes to immigration. More specifically, they need help to fill out forms, find a lawyer, they need to be accompanied during a hearing and to understand the law. This need begins upon arrival. Given that their application is often based on persecution because of their LGBTQIA identity, they are forced to disclose this identity and must very quickly learn to be at ease talking about it, which often demands a significant shift in how they relate to their identity and requires a certain level of support.

A practitioner raised a problem related to interpreters who come from the same country of origin of immigrants and refugees. Some of these interpreters share the same homo-bi-trans-phobic beliefs as their community or country of origin – and they can make LGBTQIA clients uncomfortable. Some clients feel unsafe in their presence or fear a confidentiality breach by the interpreter. These interpreters work in the settlement and integration field and they are called to work at refugee status hearings.

## Physical and Mental Health

*“... I had heard that there were services if you wanted to see a psychotherapist, but I didn’t want to talk about it – I didn’t want to go back to the war period.”*

- A refugee man in central Ontario

Access to physical and mental health services is difficult for immigrants and refugees. Finding a family doctor, a dentist, a psychologist or any other specialist is not easy, especially when one needs services in French – and more so when you are looking for someone who is aware of LGBTQIA people’s lived experiences. Even when they find a service, the cost can be a barrier for immigrants and refugees who are not covered for all such services by the Ontario Health Insurance Program or through private insurance.

*“I haven’t accessed services adapted to my identity. Again, there are gaps in health services. I haven’t told my family doctor that I’m gay. If he doesn’t ask me, I won’t tell him. There should be a procedure. The question should be asked, but not in an aggressive manner. If I had been asked the question during the first visit, I would have been shocked. There should be a procedure so that one can say this gradually.”*

- An immigrant man in northern Ontario

Needs in the area of mental health are acute. Many LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees experience isolation and face mental health problems, sometimes linked to trauma experienced in their country of origin. However, looking for help remains taboo for many of them. In addition, it is difficult to find a competent psychologist in the field of sexual or gender identity, or sexual orientation. Lastly, many look for such services in French – which reduces their chances of finding appropriate services. Given the taboo associated with mental health issues, numerous immigrants and refugees start considering accessing services later on during their settlement process. Thus, such a need can remain unaddressed even after many years living in Canada.

*“I needed massage therapy but I was not comfortable to have just anybody give it to me. So someone told me, ‘here’s where you can go, it’s my osteopath’, etc. Thus it became easy to find access.”*

*It really started with this [LGBTQIA friends] group.”*

- An immigrant man in central Ontario

In the case of a trans immigrant, needs were varied: finding a therapist, finding support for his wife and finding a personal trainer who was aware of LGBTQIA issues. After lots of research, he managed to have two of the three needs met through Anglophone professionals' services. But it was not possible to find support for his spouse, who didn't speak English. This immigrant underscored his disappointment for not having been referred to French-language LGBTQIA services by community organizations that should have been aware of such services. He realizes that his wife could have benefitted from a support group for LGBTQIA people.

## **Social, Spiritual and Religious Life**

Upon arrival, the need to break isolation and make friends re-emerges. Many LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees also have an active spiritual or religious life. They seek to integrate the communities that share their beliefs, their practices and their faith. Unfortunately, several such communities are not open to LGBTQIA people so LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees have to hide a part of their identities in order to live their spiritual or religious life. Certain religious communities that are open to LGBTQIA people, such as SALAAM and the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto don't represent all religions, are not present everywhere and do not necessarily have services in French. Some individuals also experience difficulty in reconciling their faith and their LGBTQIA identities, because of the cultural differences between the communities to which such parts of their identities are associated. Regarding social life and making friends, many mention that it takes time. Many relationships remain superficial.

## **Language Issues and French-Language Services**

*“I was able to do everything in French and that was helpful for me. Things would have been different if services had been provided in English.”*

- An immigrant man in central Ontario

In Ontario, a province where Francophone people are a minority, services in French are important and the legal obligation to provide them is set out in the French Language Services Act. French language services are particularly important for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees who already face several barriers.

*“I remember when I was searching – I had already found Family Services, an LGBT-serving organization and they help with mental health issues, such as dealing with a break-up, feeling that things are heavy around you, the immigration process, and other challenges. I had found them on the Internet. And they offered services in English. I immediately knew I would not understand. Would I be able to explain to the practitioner what I was going through? Most of all, would I understand the practitioner – cause it was me who needed the service. So I just didn’t follow up.”*

- A refugee man in central Ontario

Indeed, generally speaking, the majority of Francophone immigrants and refugees need help, in French, to find basic services upon arrival (where to get their social insurance number, government services, health centres, etc.) or specialized services a little later (marriage, having children, financial matters, accident insurance, what to do if one’s partner dies). What they find instead is a gap in French language services – and the difficulty of learning English rapidly. For those Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees who speak English, the settlement and integration process is easier as they have more options. This constitutes an injustice in a province with a legal obligation to offer services in French.

## Knowledge About Rights

*“When it comes to my LGBT identity (...) there is an essential service – the law. I reiterate and I insist. (...) as an immigrant, it is very difficult to know your rights (...).”*

- An immigrant man in western Ontario

The need to know their rights was not mentioned often by immigrant and refugee respondents. Certain practitioners talked about this issue, including those practitioners who are immigrants themselves. Among those who spoke about this matter, it seems that knowing

one's rights is a crucial element to start living openly as a LGBTQIA person in Canada. It gives a solid foundation to respond to the need to be treated equally. It also provides external tools to individuals in order to assert and defend themselves.

## Meeting LGBTQIA People

*“When you’re an immigrant and a LGBTQ person, you go from one integration system to a double integration system. In other words, you’re a member of society and a member of the LGBTQ community, which has its own codes around things such as age, colour, status, serology... All these signals and conditions that mark our North-American society. So that’s how things unfold.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

Although some practitioners did not think that this need is immediate upon arrival, the majority of immigrants and refugees, and several LGBTQIA practitioners themselves, mentioned that meeting other LGBTQIA people was important upon arrival.

We stressed previously the need to develop one’s social life. Meeting fellow LGBTQIA people is key as it allows individuals to break the isolation felt when they are not able to talk about their LGBTQIA identities with others.

## Being At Ease with One’s Identity

*“The problems I was experiencing were personal problems. When I arrived in Canada, I knew Canada was a significantly open country. It is true that homophobia still exists here, that there is work to be done. But my problems were personal. I had to own up... After 2 or 3 years in Canada, my family was informed about my sexual orientation. And as you know well, this is a very important phase.”*

- An immigrant man in eastern Ontario

*“If I hadn’t initially lived in [another province] when I arrived in Canada, I wouldn’t be the person I am today. [That province] had an effect on me, so that being gay is OK for me. If I hadn’t lived that experience, I wouldn’t have come to Ontario feeling that way. Nowadays I go back with the same feeling, even if the community is not inclusive. You must feel that it is OK.”*

- An immigrant woman in western Ontario

Several immigrants and refugees mentioned that they came to Canada after having gone through experiences of homo-bi-trans-phobia in their countries of origin. Some of them applied for refugee status on grounds of sexual orientation-related persecution. Others are economic immigrants who experienced discrimination and harassment in their social lives and workplaces in their countries of origin. The need for their identity to be recognized as legitimate and for them to be at ease with their identity is important to them. Although not all of them came to Canada looking for better living conditions as LGBTQIA people, the majority notice that they are much more respected as LGBTQIA persons in Canada. This is new for them and thus the process of becoming more at ease with their identity is gradual. Meeting other LGBTQIA people is a factor that helps them go through this process. This process is important for their settlement and integration because otherwise they will never feel they can live freely being who they are.

## **Making LGBTQIA Friends**

Settling in a new country or province involves rebuilding a circle of friends, which is not easy and takes time. The immigrants and refugees who participated in this study are open to developing friendships with all kinds of people around them and not only with LGBTQIA persons. Many of them notice that, even if they don’t plan for it to happen, after several years their circle of friends comprises LGBTQIA people. Some do actively seek to meet LGBTQIA people, in view of developing friendships or love. Others do not necessarily want only LGBTQIA friends but a mixed group of friends. Either way, having friendships with other LGBTQIA persons seems to constitute an important need for all the immigrants and refugees we heard from.

Certain practitioners who are very involved in their community also noticed this need. On the other hand, they sometimes expect LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees get involved in community groups whereas some immigrants and refugees expressed a more fundamental need to make friends informally. We notice a difference between creating personal links with LGBTQIA people and getting involved in the LGBTQIA community via its organizations. Some LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees who participated in the study are interested in only one of the two interaction modes, while others are interested in both. Future development of settlement services should take into account these two distinct social interaction types and avoid forcing immigrants and refugees into either one.

## Inclusion within Communities

### Neighbourhood

*“When you arrive here and people welcome you with open arms, asking you where are your children [meaning that it is totally normal for a LGBTQIA person to have children], talking to you like a normal person – for us it was shocking. Shocking in a good sense – but shocking.”*

- An immigrant man in northern Ontario

In regards to a welcoming and inclusive neighbourhood, immigrants and refugees' experiences are contrasting. Some of them had positive experiences and others, less positive.

Some immigrants and refugees were surprised by the degree of people's openness towards their sexual orientation compared to what they knew in their countries of origin. Their general impression was positive even if they had experienced, on occasion, homophobic reactions in their environment. On the other hand, other individuals mentioned having experienced lots of harassment and discrimination related to (1) their sexual orientation; (2) the fact that they are immigrants; and (3) the fact that they are Francophone. In order for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees to settle and integrate well, they need support to get to the bottom of these contradictory experiences.

## Workplace

In this study, we noticed that economic immigrants who have a good job seem to be more open about their sexual orientation than asylum seekers or refugees that have survival jobs. In terms of inclusion, again, experiences vary – and they sometimes vary for the same person. Some workplaces are open to LGBTQIA people. Others are not – and both LGBTQIA immigrants/refugees and LGBTQIA workers suffer harassment and, in one case, job loss as a result of harassment. As mentioned above, employment is one of the most important needs for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, so the degree of openness to LGBTQIA people in the workplace has an impact on the ability to meet such a need.

## Francophone Community

*“I have been told by Francophone people, in organizations – people who work for Francophone organizations, ‘you just haven’t met the right man for you.’”*

- An immigrant woman in western Ontario

The Francophone community in general, including Francophone individuals and organizations, unfortunately is not always open to immigrants and refugees and/or to LGBTQIA people. Certain immigrants of French origin mentioned their disappointment after several Francophone individuals from northern Ontario refused to talk to them in French as they were ashamed of the quality of their French language. Other immigrants and refugees have faced homo-bi-trans-phobic remarks and behaviour within the Francophone community – this was more frequent outside of Toronto than in Toronto. Francophone immigrants and refugees need an environment that values the diversity of the francophonie.

## LGBTQIA Community

*“I only have good things to say about Toronto’s LGBT community. Everything flowed from the fact that we got married and met that marriage officiant. It really was a very fortunate thing.”*

- An immigrant man in central Ontario

In Ontario the LGBTQIA community is very Anglophone. FrancoQueer is one of the only organizations serving Francophone LGBTQIA people in Ontario. Some LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees talked about the lack of visibility of the Francophone LGBTQIA community and the difficulty in finding information about it. Francophone people, especially those who don't speak English, find it difficult to participate in the Anglophone LGBTQIA community. Moreover, Anglophone organizations are not always aware of the presence of Francophone people among their clientele nor of the existence of small Francophone organizations they can be referred to. Others are aware but may not agree with these organizations' approach. An Anglophone practitioner mentioned that, in his experience, the Francophone LGBTQIA community had a very different profile from his young, racialized clientele. Such a clientele found it hard to relate to the members of the Francophone LGBTQIA community they met – older and mainly white. This practitioner also disagreed with the approach he had (rightly or wrongly) observed in the Francophone community. According to him, it is important not to assume that one knows the appropriate solutions for this clientele – but to allow them to find their own solutions. These perceptions did not bring him to refer his Francophone clientele to Francophone LGBTQIA organizations. Links between Francophone and Anglophone organizations are very thin if not inexistent, which does not help inclusion of Francophone people. Improving communication between Anglophone and Francophone organizations would help to avoid misunderstandings, go beyond initial impressions and share best practices.

Being an immigrant or refugee accentuates inclusion challenges within the LGBTQIA community. Some practitioners mentioned that activities such as meetings in bars are not suitable for everybody and that immigrants and refugees sometimes find themselves isolated when they attend such events. Other practitioners expect to be able to talk openly about issues of sexuality with LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees whereas the latter are perhaps not ready to do so – either for personal or cultural reasons. For instance, a practitioner's reaction to the fact that some immigrants and refugees do not want to talk about issues of sexuality was to ask “whether they really are gay” – whereas we think it is rather a cultural difference and that practitioners would benefit from cultural competency training. Other practitioners mentioned they had observed racism within the Francophone LGBTQIA community in eastern Ontario.

Immigrants, refugees and practitioners mentioned three other difficulties in the area of a welcoming and inclusive LGBTQIA community:

- A lack of inclusion of women.
- A lack of inclusion of trans people.
- A lack of confidentiality in a context where stakes are high for immigrants and refugees around disclosure of their sexual or gender identity.

## Ethno-Cultural Communities and the Settlement Sector

*“If you are in your community and you say you are LGBT they will kick you out. Here in Canada, in our communities, we don’t talk about it.”*

- A refugee man in central Ontario

According to the data collected, the lack of inclusion and homo-bi-trans-phobia are important challenges within Francophone ethno-cultural communities (or country-of-origin communities) to which immigrants and refugees belong.

*“They said: ‘I can talk about it to my ethno-cultural community – but that would put me at physical risk, and I could lose them.’ It was not worth it for them to mix both things, because that would be more detrimental than beneficial. That was somewhat hard but they also said that they were able to find what they wanted – like when you go shopping – you buy vegetables at one place, and you buy fruits at the other place.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

According to research participants, some members of the French immigrant community in Ontario are welcoming and others not at all, which mirrors the differences between French immigrants that reject or adhere to the homo-bi-trans-phobia still very present in France. LGBTQIA participants who came from various Francophone countries in Africa talked a lot about the difficulties they experience within their ethno-cultural communities. For them, it is often impossible to disclose their sexual orientation without eliciting rejection and even physical or psychological violence at the hands of their family members, friends or colleagues.

Certain immigrants and refugees also complained about homophobia in the context of their English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, both from teachers and learners. An immigrant

shared that his English teacher asked him to be more discreet about his homosexuality, telling him to keep that to himself “as his private life”, because otherwise that could upset students whose religious beliefs condemn homosexuality. Yet, this immigrant had not even mentioned his homosexuality to the teacher. Not only had she inferred the student’s sexual orientation without asking him, but she also asked him to hide it instead of intervening to raise awareness among the rest of the class around LGBTQIA issues and thus protect him from the homophobia he might encounter. Furthermore, this immigrant mentioned that the teacher in question did not intervene when students of a particular religion made comments against the religion of others. There were concurring issues of equity, homophobia and lack of cultural competency at play.

*“It’s sexual immorality – it is not permitted – it’s an extremely important act in the eyes of God, you don’t play with that.’ See, that’s the kind of preaching that numerous newcomers hear. Where they live, if people discover they are LGBTQI, they will be practically banished from the community – the individual will be rejected. The news will go around. The individual won’t be comfortable. All sorts of words will be used to refer to this person’s LGBTQI identity. In the end, the individual is likely to leave town and live outside of the community. For this person to be able to live, it will have to be outside of their community of origin. But the thing does not stop there. People are going to talk to the person’s parents who stayed back home – ‘your daughter here/your son here became one of those’. And people, following our customs, will say ‘Oh, they’ve put a spell on my son/ on my daughter – how could he/she become that?’ So it is something that does not stop here – but goes well beyond. Furthermore, within these churches, someone will be delegated to talk to the person, to tell the person ‘My Brother, what is going on?’, or ‘My Sister, what is going on? Why did you become that way?’, etc. So those are the challenges. They want to live their homosexuality behind closed doors – to avoid all these problems.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

We held a focus group with practitioners and leaders from ethno-cultural communities from all regions of Ontario. We also met a few in the context of an individual interview or other focus groups. Information shared during these interviews and focus groups conveyed

that social and religious norms condemn non-conformity in the area of gender identity and non-heterosexual practices – especially when it comes to men. Women's sexuality seems to go largely unnoticed, which is just as disquieting as it adds a sexist dimension to the problems at play. The language used to condemn non-heterosexual practices is vehement and disrespectful. Thus, it takes a lot of courage for a member of such communities to challenge these norms, either asserting themselves as a LGBTQIA person or as a heterosexual person who supports sexual minorities. It should be noted that certain practitioners show more open-mindedness when the topic is raised in the context of individual and confidential interviews, protected from the opinion of other members of their community. It should be also said that even those practitioners who conveyed homo-bi-trans-phobic opinions or remarks recognize that all immigrants and refugees have a right to the same services. Even if that is not always put into practice, and that they believe that an LGBTQIA identity does not have an impact on the settlement and integration experience (in contrast to this report's findings), there is a certain willingness to set aside personal beliefs in order to serve clients in an equitable manner.

## Differences between Refugees' and Non-Refugees' Needs

Immigrants and refugees as well as practitioners' responses to the survey questionnaire revealed that both LGBTQIA "refugees" and "non-refugees" have certain common needs. All respondents to the survey questionnaire identified the same five "most useful services" for immigrants and refugees:

1. Help to find housing.
2. Help to find employment or financial support.
3. Help with immigration issues (legal services, help to fill out forms, preparation for the hearing, etc.)
4. Psychological or physical health services.
5. Social activities (for non-refugees) or discussion groups to talk about LGBTQIA issues (for refugees).

However, both surveys and interviews/focus groups show that refugees and non-refugees also have different needs. Refugee respondents indicated having more problems in terms of knowledge of, eligibility for and access to French-language services. With the recent changes

introduced to the asylum system, rapid access to services is more urgent than ever – as it may impact the outcome of a refugee claim. In spite of these challenges, refugee respondents were more likely to have used services, and to have used a range of services (e.g. legal aid, help to fill out forms, support group, information and referrals) whereas, in general, non-refugees used only some services. This likely be due to that fact that refugees have an urgent need for help to navigate their immigration-related procedures, which demands that they use several services. The assessment results also suggest that refugees experience specific employment-related needs and barriers: although the majority of those seeking a job were refugees (58% or 7 people), only two of these seven respondents indicated having used employment support services.

Among non-refugees, 75% indicated they faced the “absence of a French-language LGBTQIA support network”, compared to only 9% of refugees. As mentioned above, non-refugees chose social activities as the fifth most useful service as opposed to discussion groups to talk about LGBTQIA issues. We conclude that non-refugees have greater needs at the social level and that they prefer a less formal support than refugees. This shows the importance of organizing different types of social activities so both immigrants and refugees are able to make friends and access activities that are suitable to them.

## Challenges around Existing Services and Gaps in Services

*Our main finding is the general lack of French-language settlement and integration services that are appropriate for LGBTQIA people.*

Settlement and integration services are generally available across Ontario and the assessment revealed that immigrants and refugees have used such services. However, these services are inadequate, as attested to by many participants in this research:

- They were unable to talk about their specific needs as LGBTQIA people.
- They did not find services offered in French.
- They did not feel that their culture or religion was respected.
- They did not find services in their region.
- They found limited access to services or experienced service interruptions because of the limited availability of the French-speaking employee or volunteer that offers them.
- They received poor quality services that did not respond to their needs.
- There is no access to appropriate services for French-speaking lesbian and bisexual women.
- There is no access to appropriate services for French-speaking trans people.
- There is a visibility for gay and lesbian identities, but there is not a comparable level of visibility for bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual identities.

In the context of the limited services available, Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees still declared having used a wide range of settlement and integration services, including help to find housing, employment supports, health and education-related services. They also participated in social activities held by Francophone organizations. Levels of satisfaction about these services vary widely.

## Services Promotion

Not all Francophone LGBTQIA refugees and immigrants used the above-mentioned services. That can be explained by a lack of locally available services, of course, but also because respondents may have been unaware of existing services. Therefore, there should be promotion efforts around existing services.

To be more precise, 47% of respondents indicated they did not use a service simply because they did not know it existed. This problem is more acute among women respondents (55%) and those respondents that do not identify as men or women (50%) as compared to men (38%) – and more acute for out-of-Toronto respondents (55%) than for those who live in Toronto (45%). We conclude that there is a great need for promotion of existing services and that such a promotion needs to particularly target LGBTQIA people outside of Toronto, as well as women and people who do not identify as men or women.

## **Homo-Bi-Trans-Phobia within the Settlement Sector and in Francophone and/or Ethno-Cultural Communities' Activities**

As mentioned before, practitioners raised the issue of homo-bi-trans-phobia in the settlement and integration sector. Examples of this include:

- Refusing to circulate an email to recruit volunteers for a LGBTQIA event such as the Pride march.
- Playing songs with explicit homophobic and violent lyrics.
- A gay man who was publicly admonished by a practitioner at an event after having asked for help around his domestic violence situation.
- A heterosexual supervisor who asked a bisexual woman practitioner to explain how she has sexual relations with another woman.
- A trans woman's isolation in a women's shelter as a result of other resident women's behaviour – and staff and management's failure to effectively intervene.

### **Fear of Identity Disclosure**

The examples of homo-bi-trans-phobic situations described previously explain Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees' fear to disclose their identities. According to some practitioners, such a fear may lead to significant consequences. The client may face difficulty finding subsidized housing if they hide the fact that they live with their partner (and would only need one bedroom) and, therefore, end up requesting a larger housing unit with two bedrooms – which is hard to find. There have also been clients who have died of HIV/AIDS since they feared to identify themselves, and thus they avoided seeking the services they needed. Homo-bi-trans-phobia in the settlement sector may lead to very negative outcomes.

### **Absence of Training**

Numerous practitioners lack appropriate training on LGBTQIA issues and on cultural competency.

## LGBTQIA Issues

Levels of knowledge vary widely among practitioners who currently serve LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees. Some of them are not familiar with the LGBTQIA acronym, which does not mean that they do not understand the experiences of LGBTQIA clients, but it demonstrates a need for training. Others are very familiar with gay men's experiences, but not with the experiences lived by bisexual or trans men, or lesbian, bisexual and trans women, let alone the other identities comprised within the LGBTQIA acronym. For instance, a practitioner seemed to associate having children with those who are bisexual, whereas all members of the LGBTQIA community may have children if they so wish.

## Cultural Competency

*“Half of our clients are [LGBTQIA] Muslims and we don't celebrate Ramadan, whereas we talk about Christmas and New Year for weeks.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

Both practitioners and immigrants/refugees themselves could benefit significantly from having a deeper understanding of the differences between their own culture and that of people with whom they interact. Cultural competency is more than “cultural awareness”, i.e. intellectual knowledge about other cultures – and more than “cultural sensitivity” or knowledge and experience about other cultures. It goes further, encompassing knowledge and skills needed to establish trust, communicate with others and create spaces where everybody feels truly included and comfortable. We mentioned previously a few relevant examples, such as conversations about sexuality or events at bars, which are not appropriate for all. Practitioners need training on these matters so they can effectively serve their clientele. For immigrants and refugees, cultural competency is a tool that supports their settlement and integration. This topic is discussed in more detail in the section on “Desired Services” later in this report.

## Lack of French-Language Services for LGBTQIA People

*“None of the supports I accessed – in fact, I never sought nor found supports in French. I thought it would only complicate things further – adding an additional factor to an already difficult search. You’re already looking for something at the margins. I thought it would be difficult to find that. So I just did what I could with what I found.”*

- An immigrant man in central Ontario

Only a small number of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees accessed information and general settlement and employment services in French. According to the immigrants and refugees’ survey questionnaire, only 30% of respondents were “always” or “often” offered settlement services in French, while 42% were offered such services “sometimes” and 28%, “rarely” or “never”. In the context of another survey question, 19% indicated that one of their problems was that information or services were not available in French. Among these, Toronto residents (at 20%), refugees (at 29%) and men (at 31%) were more likely to raise this issue.

Regarding French-language services designed for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, direct services are more numerous in Toronto – thanks to FrancoQueer’s presence since 2006. This organization offers individual and informal accompaniment by volunteers and, since 2012, a support group for newly arrived LGBTQIA people. It should be stressed, however, that FrancoQueer’s operations rely almost exclusively on volunteer work and therefore it is not easy for the organization to maintain services.

Outside of Toronto, certain LGBTQIA practitioners offer support to LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, often without support from their organization. Even in a city like Ottawa, French-language LGBTQIA services are almost non-existent. We found that both volunteer and paid practitioners who offer French-language services designed for LGBTQIA people feel isolated and experience a huge lack of support. It is therefore important to create a structured, province-wide support and exchange network.

## Immigration Status and Eligibility Issues

*“You need help to understand the system, the steps you have to take. That’s what they will provide as settlement workers. I was not able to access such services because I first arrived [in a different province] before I came to Ontario (and I was beyond the up-to-3-years requirement). Unfortunately, that is the reality of many immigrants – those 3 years. Some organizations offered me help informally – but that’s not the way to proceed. I don’t know if things have changed now. I know that, for some programs, you can access them as long as you’ve not become a citizen yet. You need services not only during the first 3 years here. I am speaking as an immigrant.”*

- An immigrant woman in western Ontario

The immigrants and refugees that we met had various immigration statuses – from Canadian citizens to permanent residents, work permit holders, refugees and refugee claimants. During the course of our research, we learned that some asylum seekers had gained their refugee status while others were rejected and remained without legal status in Canada. Let us stress as well that some immigrants were not new in Canada but were new in Ontario (coming from Québec, for instance) and they needed support. The survey questionnaire revealed that 16% of respondents were refused services because of their immigration status, because they were either asylum seekers, international students or temporary workers. Therefore we take note of the importance of developing services for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees that would be open to all, regardless of immigration status.

## Desired Services

### Positive Spaces for LGBTQIA People

*“(…) they were in a Francophone LGBT support group setting, and it was like... a total relief. Even if they didn’t talk much about their sexual orientation, just the fact that they knew they were in a safe*

*space – that would deeply soothe them. They often say ‘I love coming here because it’s the only moment when I feel really well, when I can feel comfortable – when it’s OK to talk about it...’ So I think – nowhere else in their lives do they experience that.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

As mentioned previously, a “positive space” is an environment where LGBTQIA people feel respected. A large majority of the people we met consider it important to create positive spaces. However, there was no agreement about how to do it. Some believe that an effort should be made to transform all existing services into “positive spaces”. Others think that LGBTQIA-specialized services should be created too. Similarly, there is debate about whether the practitioners who specialize in serving LGBTQIA people should be members of that community or not. Opinions varied among immigrants and refugees as well as among practitioners. This debate underscores the importance of thinking critically about how to build a truly “positive” space.

*“(...) I also know that you’d better not talk a lot about your sexual orientation – nor express it too openly, nor be involved in the LGBTQIA community. Organizations and practitioners fear losing other clients if they show too much openness towards LGBTQIA people.”*

- A practitioner in western Ontario

Furthermore, some practitioners who are LGBTQIA people themselves mentioned that organizations tend to believe that they are “positive spaces” whereas in reality they are not. Indeed, the practitioners’ survey showed that 52% consider their organization to be welcoming towards LGBTQIA clients, whereas 82% of respondents to the immigrants and refugees’ questionnaire disclose their identity only sometimes, rarely – or never. Some practitioners think they have had sufficient training after having attended only one workshop, whereas their knowledge is very superficial. Others conclude that having information on their website or displaying a poster with a rainbow is enough to be considered a “positive space”.

Still, practitioners mentioned certain elements that are necessary to create “positive spaces” and they wish that all settlement sector organizations would develop them:

- Signage that shows openness towards LGBTQIA people (e.g., containing a rainbow).
- On-going training on LGBTQIA issues and on the “positive space” concept.
- Internal policies on discrimination and confidentiality.
- A complaints mechanism.
- A vision of inclusion (acknowledgement of each LGBTQIA sub-group, gender equality, cultural competency, knowledge of HIV/AIDS, addiction and mental health issues, etc.).

*“(...) practitioners should (...) be well trained on the realities facing LGBTQI people (...) Then the organization could offer services to an LGBTQI client in a safe environment: the practitioner should be open, make the LGBTQI person feel very welcome and that they shouldn’t worry about the impact of talking about their sexual orientation, that they are in a non-judgemental environment, in a safe space. ‘I will help you navigate the system offering the services you need as an LGBTQIA individual.’ That should really be the mandate to be adopted by a Francophone organization that is not exclusively a LGBTQI organization.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

When it comes to signage and training, the practitioners’ survey showed that the organizations where 37% of respondents work do not have a “positive space” poster. Also, 23% of respondents (6 people) are not acquainted with the term “positive space” even though 4 of them indicate that they work in an organization that offers specialized services for LGBTQIA people. This shows that even the organizations that offer specialized services for LGBTQIA people need on-going training so that their services actually are up to the service standards they declare they have in place.

*“There has to be a certain type of pressure coming from funders: ‘if you take this funding, you must have an anti-oppression policy and a mechanism allowing clients to file a complaint.’”*

- A practitioner in eastern Ontario

In terms of the development of anti-discrimination policies, the practitioners’ survey revealed that 47% of the organizations they work or volunteer for have an anti-discrimination policy that explicitly mentions gender identity, gender identity expression and sexual orientation – in compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. However, 9% of these respondents

stated that the policy is not implemented. The other respondents indicated that their organization has a policy that does not mention those types of discrimination (22%), that they do not know the details of their organization's policy (16%) or that their organization does not have such a policy (6%).

*“Confidentiality is crucial, but I currently find that it is not understood within the Francophone LGBT community. It seems like confidentiality is a difficult issue. So an additional effort needs to be made so this issue is well understood by staff – and properly implemented. Sometimes, folks don't like confidentiality because they want everyone to be open and disclose themselves. For me, it is more about creating a space where certain matters that are exchanged as information – that it is clear what is confidential and what isn't. That the client be able to make their choices, that we give that power to the client. As a practitioner, you don't make choices on behalf of the client.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

In the area of confidentiality policies, all respondents to the practitioners' survey said their organizations have a policy. However, the survey revealed the following details:

- 50% of respondents' organizations have a policy that explicitly mentions you should not disclose a staff member's or client's sexual orientation or sexual/gender identity without their consent.
- 44% have a policy but it does not explicitly address the issue of LGBTQIA disclosure.
- 6% were not aware of the details in their organization's confidentiality policy.

These data and practitioners' observations point towards the need for organizations to review their anti-discrimination and confidentiality policies and practices.

*“Those who are well settled and confident and proud of the way they express being a LGBT person, it's to continue being public, to increase the number of occasions where they can express themselves, such as Pride, the parade, to include other people, open to the community – all in all, grassroots community development.”*

- A practitioner in northern Ontario

The development of “positive spaces” requires leadership from the community and government. A practitioner mentioned the importance of building community leadership among well-settled Francophone LGBTQIA individuals in Ontario who are able to assert their identity – which has historically been at the foundations of progress for LGBTQIA people in Ontario and internationally. A practitioner mentioned that the government should lead by example, encouraging the development of these “positive spaces” as it is a social responsibility, not an individual responsibility.

In terms of more specific suggestions, some practitioners suggested creating a Francophone centre specializing in settlement services for LGBTQIA people. Such a centre would offer basic settlement services, would address LGBTQIA identities, sexual health (including HIV/AIDS), mental health and social life. Moreover, a practitioner suggested that there should be part-time Francophone settlement workers who would be trained on LGBTQIA issues and would offer services in partnership with settlement sector organizations across the province. Finally, several practitioners suggested raising awareness and offering trainings so that all settlement services in Ontario become “positive spaces”.

## Cultural Competency Skills

*“Cultural competency (...) is not about being knowledgeable of Sri Lankan culture [for instance], but being able to question yourself and know that there are certain ways, certain cultural expressions such that your own conclusions – maybe they are not the right ones. That’s all. That’s where I’m coming from – it’s a starting point, a way to go about things that leads you to a certain kind of tolerance.”*

- A practitioner in central Ontario

It is important to develop services to be offered by practitioners who are culturally competent. Steps should be taken to ensure that discussions on sexuality within LGBTQIA circles are adapted to cultural diversity. In the context of certain cultures, it is not possible to talk about sexuality openly. That is different from North-American gay culture. Thus, ‘culture’ can refer to a country’s culture or a religion’s culture – but also to the culture of a social group such as white gay men or black trans people. Therefore cultural competency is closely linked to the “positive space” concept raised previously.

In the context of discussions around cultural competency, the issue of the service provider's identities (gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, etc.) resurfaces. The identity of such an individual and their level of cultural competency are two important factors to be taken into consideration when developing services. Indeed, although some individuals feel more at ease with people with the same life experiences or culture, the contrary is also true. For instance, certain practitioners mentioned that, for their black Francophone LGBTQIA clients, it is reassuring to meet a black Francophone LGBTQIA practitioner because that makes them feel less lonely in their identity. Meanwhile, others mentioned that their black clients felt more at ease with a white practitioner because of the concern that a black practitioner might be homo-bi-trans-phobic. Therefore it seems important to create an environment that clearly demonstrates cultural competency beyond the (visible or invisible) identity of the individual providing the service. In such a context, it is also important to have staff members who share identity features with the clientele. Thus a certain balance should be struck between having staff members who share identity elements with the clientele and staff members' cultural competency, regardless of they identify as individuals.

## French-Language Services

This report comprises a large number of examples of the impact of not accessing French-language services – and the difference they would make. All the individuals met through this research, regardless of whether they speak English or not, consider it important to offer settlement and other professional services in French – and in a manner that is adapted to the needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees. Such services are needed across the province and, where they already exist, it is important to promote them appropriately.

## Information

Some participants indicated they would appreciate a booklet or directory, written in French, describing the basic services that are important upon arrival (local resources, where to find services, what are you entitled to) or a centralized telephone number that offers such information. They suggested distributing this information at points of arrival, such as the airport or businesses that hire immigrants. Others mentioned the importance of offering this information online, either on [Etablissement.Org](http://Etablissement.Org), [FrancoQueer.ca](http://FrancoQueer.ca) or other websites.

## Accompaniment and Referrals

*“It could be a person, other than one’s lawyer, who’s able to accompany individuals. I know of a Chinese person who accompanies other Chinese people to the immigration offices at Kipling. It would be good to have someone like that for Francophone LGBTQI people – to accompany them during the hearing. When you are alone at the hearing, it’s hard.”*

- A refugee woman in central Ontario

It would be good to develop accompaniment and referral services for Francophone LGBTQIA people offered by reliable individuals to whom they may ask questions throughout their settlement and integration process.

That could be done in a number of ways. Some participants mentioned having a team to offer follow-up to refugee seekers throughout the legal process and that also addresses education and employment needs (credentials recognition, options of education programs in Canada, etc.). Others talked about an individual or group twinning service, whereby immigrants and refugees are matched to one or more volunteers who can facilitate their integration.

## Professional Services

*“And there are almost no Francophone lawyers there (...). You have a right to 30 minutes, than you have to come back again. I went there about 6 or 7 times – and I was able to talk to a bilingual lawyer once.”*

- An immigrant man in eastern Ontario

## Legal Support

Some participants recommended developing a good referrals system to appropriate legal services for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees.

Free-of-charge legal aid services for low-income refugee claimants are available across the province. However, they are not always available in French or adapted to LGBTQIA people. Legal services that are adapted to one's sexual orientation or gender identity are particularly crucial in cases of individuals who claim refugee status on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity-related persecution. Furthermore, existing services are limited. When an asylum seeker's application is rejected, sometimes they can continue to benefit from free-of-charge legal aid – but that is not always the case. In such circumstances, the individual ends up trying to find legal services in the private sector, not always knowing how to go about it nor having the necessary financial means.

Immigrants and refugees in general also need legal services to renew their work permit and apply for permanent residence or Canadian citizenship. Again, often they do not know how to proceed.

### Mental Health

*“Was this psychological help service offered in French?”*

*“No. Had I searched for a service in French, it would have been practically impossible for me. I could have gone to the Consulate and ask for a recommendation. They would have given me names, but I really was looking for competent people. You are dealing with issues linked to sexual, gender identity – you're looking for someone who is at least minimally familiar with that.”*

- An immigrant man in central Ontario

This report includes a number of examples of the impact of not accessing mental health services – and the difference such access can make. Some participants suggested developing a support group to foster Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees' mental health. Specialized, professional counselling services for Francophone LGBTQIA people are particularly important for those who have suffered physical or psychological trauma, but also for those who prefer individual support.

## Social Activities

Suggestions of social activities included:

- Social activities in different settings (for instance, settings with alcohol consumption versus those without alcohol consumption) and around varied topics so there is a wide range of options responding to diverse cultures, needs and tastes.
- Create activities that are exclusive for LGBTQIA women.
- Create a black Francophone LGBTQIA network in Ottawa.
- Activities conducive to creating real relationships, e.g. in an informal setting, that would take place both in the gay neighbourhood (if there is one in the local context) and outside of it.

## Choice of Services Offered

*“It is important to access gay and non-gay people, in order to integrate all communities. (...) The Francophone community is already small, than the LGBTQIA community within is a micro-community. It is a bit concerning. It is suffocating. So the idea is to have services targeted at Francophone LGBTQIA people, but open to the wider community. If there are twinning groups, or the like, you have to have all kinds of people present, LGBT or not.”*

- An immigrant man in western Ontario

Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees wish to be able to choose from various services adapted to their needs. They feel the need to be in touch with more than one community. That gives them more chances to find people with whom they will develop closeness.

## Services across Ontario Regions

Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees are not necessarily numerous in all Ontario regions, but they all need services. Services should thus be made available to them across Ontario.

## Volunteer Recruitment and Training

Some practitioners raised the importance of being rigorous when recruiting volunteers in the LGBTQIA community. Some organizations recruit volunteers among LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees themselves. Such individuals are often at the early stages of their own settlement process and are vulnerable, either because their immigration status is not stable or because they do not have financial means or because they have a social network that is only starting to develop. Therefore, organizations should offer training and create a climate where individuals volunteer because they wish to do so – and after having been informed about the benefits, realities and responsibilities involved in such an engagement.

Some practitioners also stated that volunteers should be trained so they can work with vulnerable people. For instance, Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees experiencing difficulties in the context of a vulnerable situation could give a lot of importance to what such volunteers say. The latter should thus be trained to act accordingly and have a clear idea of their role while interacting with the individuals they accompany or support.

## Collaboration and Support among Service Providers

Immigrants and refugees, as well as practitioners, would like more collaboration and support among organizations in order to:

- Inform Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees about existing services.
- Improve communications with Anglophone LGBTQIA organizations about existing French-language LGBTQIA services, and facilitate information sharing between the two groups.
- Develop an effective referrals mechanism for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees.
- Offer a wider choice of services to this clientele.
- Respect confidentiality and the need these clients may have to distance themselves or remain close to their community-of-origin.
- Create opportunities for mutual support among often isolated practitioners.

Moreover, some participants think that in order to properly serve this clientele in all aspects of their identities (immigrant/refugee, Francophone, LGBTQIA) and across Ontario, partnerships should be created, as it is difficult for one organization alone to meet all those needs.

A practitioner proposed to hold a provincial symposium on the needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, in order to create a properly structured support network. This type of event would help to create beneficial linkages among organizations.

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<sup>10</sup> See previous note (note 9).

<sup>11</sup> See: <http://learnatwork.ca/course/category.php?id=12>.

# VI

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Training

*Our first recommendation is to train Francophone settlement workers on LGBTQIA issues, “positive spaces” and cultural competency. We also recommend training Anglophone settlement workers on the situation of Francophones. We consider that training constitutes a good practice in view of educating organizations around the realities currently experienced by LGBTQIA staff members and clients.*

The training should cover basic notions such as LGBTQIA-related terminology, and stereotypes associated with LGBTQIA people. The training should also address how to take into account a client’s sexual or gender identity and sexual orientation when assessing their settlement and integration needs. The training could be offered in a classic lecture format – but it should also include interactive elements and transmit LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees’ stories and lived experiences through texts or audio-visual tools, for instance. Where appropriate, it could offer practitioners an opportunity to meet LGBTQIA individuals in an environment that is safe for everyone. For those who already have basic knowledge if they belong to the LGBTQIA community or serve a LGBTQIA clientele, the training should offer a more in-depth approach to less known issues such as the realities facing bisexual or trans people, or some cultures and religions.

Given the degree of homo-bi-trans-phobia within the settlement sector that was noticed in the context of this assessment, a good practice would be that practitioners participate in regular training as opposed to one-offs. It would also be beneficial to offer LGBTQIA-related training in the context of a larger training – to avoid that some practitioners opt out of it due to a lack of openness towards the theme. We should stress that on-going training is important in all environments, even in those where “positive spaces” have already been developed, as it would foster a good maintenance of the positive space and knowledge updates.

We acknowledge that organizations such as OCASI and Rainbow Health offer trainings on this topic to both Anglophone and Francophone practitioners. In 2014, OCASI received funding to hire a part-time Francophone trainer for its Initiative Espaces positifs project. Yet it is only a start. In order to have greater impact and respond to the striking demand from Francophone LGBTQIA clients, we recommend allocating permanent resources for French-language training and that a full-time position be created for this purpose. We also suggest, as a good practice, creating partnerships between various Francophone LGBTQIA organizations and settlement organizations to continue offering this training. We think it is important to develop educational materials on a larger number of topics, such as disclosure in the workplace or the realities of bisexual or trans people, making sure that such educational materials are adapted to the Francophone culture, including the various ethno-cultural experiences that are a part of it. Finally, we encourage practitioners and their organizations to develop strategies to foster a greater openness towards this type of training in the area of settlement and integration.

Although we believe that the most urgent matter is to train settlement sector practitioners, we also recommend training the following groups:

- Settlement sector clients.
- Francophone community organizations, including their board of directors, managers, staff and volunteers.
- Anglophone and Francophone LGBTQIA groups, including their staff and volunteers.
- Francophone interpreters who work in the settlement and other sectors, such as social, legal and health services.
- Francophone students in various relevant education sectors (health, law, etc.).
- Health promotion organizations and networks.
- Francophone social workers.
- Francophone doctors.

- Francophone lawyers working for Legal Aid.
- Members of the Immigration and Refugee Board<sup>12</sup>.

## Settlement and Integration Services

We recommend developing that “positive spaces” be integrated in all French-language settlement and integration services offered in the province. The training we recommended previously would allow organizations to better understand what constitutes a “positive space” and to create one in their workplace. The training and the “positive space” would enable them to also adopt the good practice of referring their clients to appropriate services when they are not able to respond to their needs. Therefore, LGBTQIA practitioners, immigrants and refugees would feel increasingly welcome anywhere in the province.

We also recommend developing French-language information (in both electronic and paper formats) and specialized settlement and integration services targeting the Francophone LGBTQIA immigrant and refugee clientele. This could be offered through a province-wide telephone support line that would respond to those persons among Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees who are isolated or who wish to benefit from a greater level of confidentiality.

Another good practice we recommend is that the information and services be developed by people who are Francophone, who identify as LGBTQIA and who have cultural competency skills related to LGBTQIA issues. Then, information and services should be made available and accessible to all Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees regardless of their immigration status. These service development initiatives should be supported through the creation of specialized positions and the allocation of appropriate resources.

# A Provincial Support Network for Practitioners

We recommend developing a province-wide network to support current French-language initiatives for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, as they are not numerous and practitioners involved in them often feel isolated. Where appropriate, this network should also include Anglophone allies. For instance, a central organization could manage an email list of members and organize a few teleconferences per year, or a closed online chat room with the purpose of exchanging good practices and encouraging mutual support. This provincial network would provide general support to volunteer or practitioners who already offer services to LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees. We believe that it is not possible to develop new services without supporting those already in place. We recommend sharing the results of the present needs assessment through a symposium where the proposed network could be created.

## Services Promotion

We recommend developing an inventory of the existing services for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees and developing promotion strategies for such services, reaching out to all members of this community, especially those who reside outside of Toronto, women and trans people. We further recommend promoting these services effectively across the province – including among Anglophone practitioners.

## Structure and Governance for Service Provision

Given the almost complete absence of appropriate services for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in Ontario, we recommend supporting Francophone organizations

## Recommendations

that already offer targeted services to this clientele. We also recommend supporting the development of the structure and the governance needed for supporting existing services and for the creation of new services targeting this clientele. Hence, we further recommend granting the necessary funds to develop and maintain such structures.

The development and maintenance of such structures should include researching current best practices in the area of services for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees – and developing new ones. This requires an understanding of the risks associated with offering such services. For instance, as some practitioners explained in the context of this needs assessment, existing services often depend on good will from volunteers or employees who do not have support from their environment. Given this lack of support, the following poor practices could unfold:

- Confusion of roles:
  - Between being a friend or a practitioner.
  - Between acting in a personal capacity or on behalf of one's organization.
- Failure to respect confidentiality:
  - When you belong to such a small circle of LGBTQIA people everything ends up being known.

Furthermore, some activities are particularly delicate, such as giving letters of support to Francophone LGBTQIA refugee claimants. Practitioners need guidelines and support in the context of this kind of activity.

The development of a structure and governance for an organization should also include creating policies such as:

- An anti-discrimination policy encompassing issues of sexual or gender identity and sexual orientation.
- An anti-oppression policy.
- A confidentiality policy covering the issue of disclosure as well as all other issues having been declared as confidential by LGBTQIA people.

Finally, in view of implementing these policies, we recommend developing a complaints mechanism in cases of behaviour that does not comply with the policies, and including training for employees and volunteers on the implementation of the policies.

We also recommend that, besides the organizations already serving the Francophone LGBTQIA immigrant and refugee population, all organizations in the settlement and integration sector should develop the above-mentioned policies and the necessary procedures for their implementation.

## Research

Given the almost complete non-existence of research in the area of settlement and integration services offered to Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, we recommend conducting more research to inform the development of services for such a clientele. New research could focus on specific groups, such as youth between 15 and 25 years old and persons over 55 years old, or women. It would also be useful to conduct research on current best practices in Canada in the area of services to Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees.

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<sup>12</sup> We recognize that the IRB has already offered its members training on LGBTQIA issues. We recommend that it continues to offer them regularly.

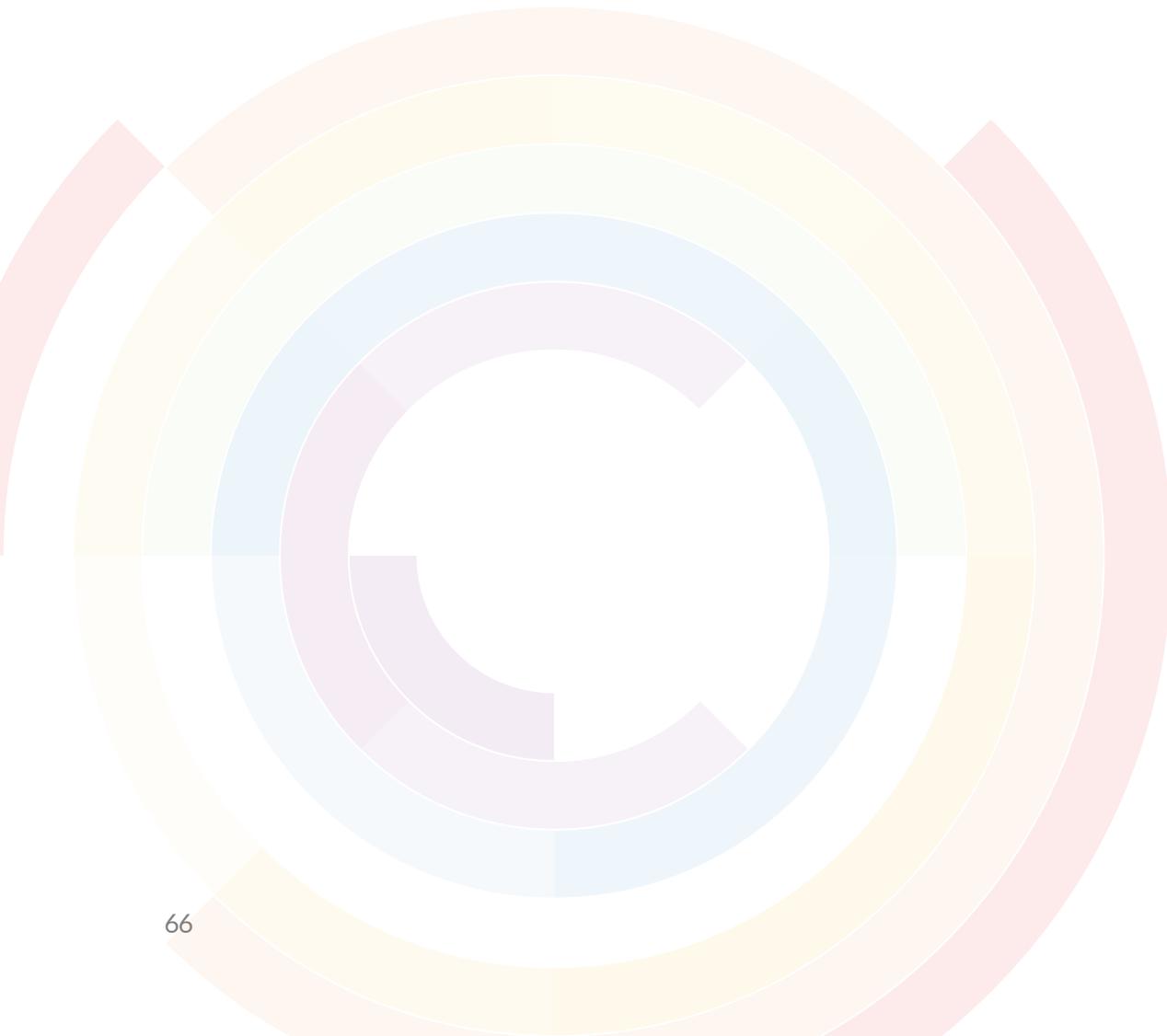
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## CONCLUSION

*The present needs assessment demonstrates the striking need for settlement and integration information and services for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in Ontario. Although this is a subgroup of the Francophone immigrant and refugee community in Ontario, it deserves the respect and attention needed for a dignified settlement and integration experience. Regarding potential future research, it would be interesting to explore the situation of young Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees 15 to 24 years old, as well as existing services for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in other Canadian provinces.*

The law in Ontario and Canada is clear regarding respect towards LGBTQIA people, regardless of whether they are immigrant, refugee, Francophone or Anglophone people – harassment and discrimination are prohibited. For its part, the French Language Service Act establishes the obligation to offer quality services in French to Francophones in Ontario. The health sector is flooded with LGBTQIA people speaking all languages who suffer the grave physical and psychological consequences of harassment, discrimination and fear of disclosing their LGBTQIA identities. Awareness raising, training, improvement of the quality of

information and services in the settlement and integration field can be of help to respect the legal framework and to free Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees from a burden that causes them too much suffering. We hope that this needs assessment report will elicit a collective engagement to mobilize the necessary resources to undertake these steps.



# VIII

## APPENDICES

### A. Survey Questionnaire – Immigrants and Refugees

*FrancoQueer / OCASI*

*Assessing the Settlement and Integration Needs of Francophone LGBTQIA New Immigrants and Refugees.*

*Immigrants and Refugees' Survey Questionnaire.*

#### **Goals:**

There is currently very little information on the settlement and integration experiences and needs of Francophone LGBTQIA new immigrants and refugees in Ontario. Your participation in this survey will offer important data to raise awareness at government and service provider level to the needs of this group of people and to develop services for its members.

This needs assessment is made possible through a partnership between OCASI – the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants and FrancoQueer, and with a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

#### **Eligibility to participate in the survey:**

Francophone LGBTQIA individuals who currently live in Ontario, were not born in Canada and intend to settle in Ontario are eligible to participate in this survey. The LGBTQIA

acronym comprises lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people. This survey is thus open to individuals who are immigrants (including the economic and family class categories), refugees, asylum seekers, persons without status, temporary foreign workers and international students who wish to settle in Canada.

## **Instructions:**

Please fill out this questionnaire only once, either online or on paper. You will need about 15 minutes to complete it.

If you respond to the survey questionnaire on paper, when you finish please insert in the provided envelope and put it in the box designated by the organization responsible for follow-up. The organization will mail the sealed envelopes to Erika Gates-Gasse at 110 Eglinton Ave West, suite 200, Toronto, M4R 1A3.

## **Confidentiality:**

This survey is confidential and anonymous. Only Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and Research Coordinator and Julie Lassonde, lawyer and consultant hired for this study by FrancoQueer will have access to the questionnaires.

## **Risks and benefits:**

This research project is considered a low risk endeavour. That said, some individuals may feel uncomfortable to talk about their LGBTQIA experience. If you are concerned that your participation may harm you, please do not hesitate to talk about this with the person that gave you the survey questionnaire. We admire your courage and are very grateful for your participation in this important study. A summary of the final report will be published online – on OCASI and FrancoQueer’s websites.

## Voluntary participation:

Your participation is voluntary. You can stop your participation in this survey at any moment.

## Do you have questions about this research?

If you have questions about this project or about your participation in it, please do not hesitate to be in touch with the person responsible for it: Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and Research Coordinator at 416-322-4950, extension 227; egates@ocasi.org; 110 Eglinton Ave West, suite 200, Toronto, M4R 1A3.

## Consent:

**Do you agree to participate in this survey?** (Please circle only one option)

Yes / No

.....

### Part I: Demographic Information

**1. Do you live in Ontario?** (Please circle only one option)

- Yes / No

\*If you answered "No", you are not eligible to participate in this survey. Please inform the person or the organization that gave you this questionnaire.

**2. What is your age?** (Please check only one)

Options	√
15 to 24 years old	
25 to 34 years old	
35 to 44 years old	

45 to 54 years old	
55 to 64 years old	
65 or older	

**3. Before coming to Canada, in which country did you spend most of your life?**

- Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Do you consider yourself:** (Please check all that apply)

Options	√
Black	
Asian	
Southeast Asian	
South Asian	
Latin American	
Aboriginal	
White	
I'd rather not say	
Other - please specify:	

**5. Length of your stay in Canada** (Please check only one)

Options	√
Less than 1 year	
1 to 4 years	
5 to 9 years	
More than 10 years	

**6. Which of the following options best describe your sexual/gender identity?** (Please check all that apply)

Appendices

Options	√
Woman	
Man	
Intersex person	
Transgender	
Transsexual	
Genderqueer	
Trans man	
Trans woman	
Two-Spirited	
Questioning	
Other- please specify:	

7. Which of the following options best describe your identity in terms of sexual orientation? (Please check all that apply)

Options	√
Lesbian	
Gay	
Bisexual	
Two-Spirited	
Berdache	
Queer	
Asexual	
Heterosexual	
Man who has sexual relations with other men	
Woman who has sexual relations with other women	
Questioning	
Other - please specify:	

8. **What is the first language you learnt at home when you were a child and that you still understand?** If you no longer understand the first language you learnt, please indicate the second language you learnt. (Please check only one)

<b>Options</b>	√
French	
English	
Other - Please specify:	

9. **French is:** (Please check only one)

<b>Options</b>	√
The first language I learnt	
The second language I learnt	
The third language I learnt	
The fourth or more language I learnt	

10. **What is your proficiency level in French?** (Please check only one option in each column)

<b>Spoken French</b>	√	<b>Written French</b>	√
No proficiency		No proficiency	
Basic		Basic	
Intermediate		Intermediate	
Advanced		Advanced	

11. **What is your proficiency level in English?** (Please check only one option in each column)

<b>Spoken English</b>	√	<b>Written English</b>	√
No proficiency		No proficiency	
Basic		Basic	
Intermediate		Intermediate	
Advanced		Intermediate	

**12. What is your highest educational level?** (Please check only one)

Options	√
No formal education	
Elementary level	
Secondary level, <i>lycée</i> or equivalent	
Technical or trades training (welding, hairstyling or other)	
College level diploma or certificate	
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	
Diploma - Regulated professions (medicine, engineering, law or other)	
Master's degree	
Doctorate	
Post-doctoral degree	

**13. What is your current employment/studies situation?** (Please check all that apply)

Options	√
Full-time student	
Part-time student	
Full-time employee	
Part-time employee	
Employed, with two or more part-time jobs	
Unemployed, seeking a job	
Unemployed, not seeking a job	
Volunteer	
Retired	
Other - please specify:	

**14. I arrived in Canada as a:** (Please check only one)

Options	√
Asylum seeker or refugee claimant	

Government-sponsored refugee	
Privately-sponsored refugee (i.e. by an individual or an organization)	
Economic class refugee	
Family member of a main economic class applicant	
Live-in care giver	
Sponsored family member	
Visitor	
Temporary foreign worker	
International student	
Person without status	

**15. My current immigration status is:** (Please check only one)

<b>Options</b>	√
Asylum seeker or refugee claimant	
Refugee status granted	
Permanent resident	
Canadian citizen	
Study permit	
Work permit	
Person without status	

**16. In what city do you currently live most of the time?**

- Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Do you live with one or more of the following functional limitations or disabilities?**

(Please check all that apply)

<b>Options</b>	√
Learning disability Troubles d'apprentissage	
Speech impediment or language difficulties	
Hearing limitation	

Developmental disability	
Physical disability (mobility)	
Psychological disability (mental health)	
Visual impairment	
No functional limitation or disability known	

**18. Which of the following options best describes your religion or faith?**

<b>Options</b>	√
Catholicism	
Christianity	
Judaism	
Islam	
Buddhism	
Hinduism	
Atheism	
No religion or faith	
Other - please specify:	

**19. What was your personal revenue (before taxes) for the year ending December 31st, 2013 (including pensions and student loans)?** (Please check only one)

<b>Options</b>	√
Net loss	
No revenue	
Less than \$20,000	
\$20,000 to \$39,999	
\$40,000 to \$59,999	
\$60,000 to \$79,999	
\$80,000 to \$99,999	
\$100,000 to \$124,999	
\$125,000 to \$149,999 125 000 \$ - 149 999 \$	

Over \$150,000	
I'd rather not say	
I don't know	

**20. Who do you live with?** (Please check all that apply)

Options	√
Alone	
Friend(s)	
Roommate(s)	
My children	
My partner / spouse / husband/wife	
Extended family / other family members	
At least one of my parents (including foster, in-law parents and informal caregivers)	
I live in a shelter	
Other	

**21. What is your marital status?** (Please check all that apply)

Options	√
Single/Unattached	
Common law (non married) partner - with a same-sex person	
Common law (non married) partner - with a different-sex person	
Married - to a same-sex person	
Married - to a different-sex person	
Dating only	
Divorced	
Widow	
Other	

## Part II: Services

**22. Since you arrived in Canada, what has been your level of satisfaction regarding the services you have used?** (Please check one option per line, selecting from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates you were “Very unsatisfied” and 5, “Very satisfied”. If you have never used a particular service, check “Never used”).

### GENERIC SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Types of services	Never used	Very unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
		1	2	3	4	5
English-language training						
French-language training						
Referrals to community or government services						
Emotional support by a settlement counsellor						
Help to find housing						
Help to find a school						
Help to find physical or mental health services						
Help to find services for people living with HIV/AIDS						
Help to find legal services						
Help to fill out immigration or refugee status forms						
Linguistic interpretation services						
Translation services						

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Information workshop or group session on how to settle in Ontario						
Support group for newcomers						
Support group for LGBTQIA newcomers						
Social activities organized by a community group						
Accompaniment for immigration, health or other appointments						

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Types of services	Never used	Very unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
		1	2	3	4	5
Employment support services (job search, resume writing, interview preparation support, etc.)						
<b>Ontario Bridging Programs</b> to improve your skills, your experience or education in a <b>regulated</b> profession or trade						

<b>Ontario Bridging Programs</b> to improve your skills, your experience or education in a <b>non-regulated</b>						
Internship programs						
Mentoring programs						
Programs / training for self-employment or entrepreneurship						

**23. If you have not used some of the generic settlement or employment support programs mentioned in the previous questions, could you please tell us why?** (Please check all that apply)

Reason(s)	√
I did not need help.	
I was not or am not eligible for such services because of my immigration status.	
The services or the information were NOT available in French.	
The services were NOT available in my region.	
Information is only available online and I do not have a computer, Internet access or computer skills.	
I feared discrimination linked to my sexual orientation.	
I feared discrimination linked to my gender identity or sexual identity.	
The services did not respond to my sexual orientation-related needs.	
The services did not respond to my gender identity or sexual identity-related needs.	
At the time I did not know such services were available.	
Services were located too far from me.	
I did not have transportation means to access such services.	
Child-minding services were not available for me.	
People in my circle advised me not to use such services.	
My needs were met before I heard about service providers.	
I am planning to use some of those services, but have not done it yet.	

Other - please specify:	
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**24. Overall, how difficult was it to find and get in touch with these services?** (Please check only one)

<b>Options</b>	√
Very difficult	
Difficult	
Easy	
Very easy	

**25. Overall, were these services offered in French?** (Please check only one)

<b>Options</b>	√
Always	
Often	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

**26. Overall, have you disclosed your sexual orientation / gender or sexual identity to service providers?** (Please check only one)

<b>Options</b>	√
Always	
Often	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

**27. If you answered “sometimes”, “rarely” or “never” to the previous question, why was that the case?** (Please check all that apply)

Reason(s)	√
My sexual orientation / gender or sexual identity is not their business.	
My service provider could have been uncomfortable with my sexual orientation / gender or sexual identity.	
My sexual orientation / gender or sexual identity have no impact on my settlement in Ontario.	
My service provider could have talked to others about my sexual orientation / gender or sexual identity.	
I did not feel comfortable to talk about it.	
I felt I was being pressured to talk about it – and I did not want to.	
Other – please specify:	

**28. Overall, regarding your sexual orientation / gender or sexual identity, did you feel respected by service providers?** (Please check only one)

Options	√
Always	
Often	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

**29. If a Francophone LGBTQIA organization offered the following settlement services in your region, which services would be most useful for you?**

Please rate these services from 1 to 10, starting by 1 (the most useful service) and until 10 (the least useful service):

Services	Rate from 1 to 10
Help to find housing	
Help with immigration issues (legal services, help to fill out forms, etc.)	
Help to find employment or financial support	
Psychological or physical health services	
Services for people living with HIV/AIDS	
Discussion group to talk about LGBTQIA issues	
Social activities	
Religious or spiritual activities	
English-language training	
French-language training	

**30. In your opinion, what services are lacking for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in your region? Please specify:**

### Part III: Needs & Challenges

**31. How often do you attend LGBTQIA community activities in your region?** (Please check only one)

Never	A few times a year	Once a month	Once a week	Everyday

**32. In your opinion, is the LGBTQIA community in your region welcoming?**

(Please check only one option, from 1 to 5: 1 indicates "Not welcoming at all" and 5, "Very welcoming"; if you don't know, please check "I don't know")

Not welcoming at all 1	Not welcoming 2	Somewhat welcoming 3	Welcoming 4	Very welcoming 5	I don't know

**33. How often do you attend Francophone community activities in your region?** (Please check only one)

Never	A few times a year	Once a month	Once a week	Everyday

**34. In your opinion, is the Francophone community in your region welcoming?** (Please check only one option, from 1 to 5: 1 indicates "Not welcoming at all" and 5, "Very welcoming"; if you don't know, please check "I don't know")

Not welcoming at all 1	Not welcoming 2	Somewhat welcoming 3	Welcoming 4	Very welcoming 5	I don't know

**35. How often do you attend activities of your country-of-origin/ethno-cultural community in your region?** (Please check only one)

Never	A few times a year	Once a month	Once a week	Everyday

**36. In your opinion, is your country-of-origin/ethno-cultural community in your region welcoming when it comes to your sexual orientation and your gender/sexual identity?**

(Please check only one option, from 1 to 5: 1 indicates "Not welcoming at all" and 5, "Very welcoming"; if you don't know, please check "I don't know")

Not welcoming at all 1	Not welcoming 2	Somewhat welcoming 3	Welcoming 4	Very welcoming 5	I don't know

**37. Did you experience the following challenges or problems as you settled in Ontario?**

(Please check all that apply)

<b>Types of challenges or problems</b>	√
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**GENERAL**

Finding health services	
Finding housing	
Finding employment	
Finding help around immigration issues (asylum claim or citizenship application, filling out forms, etc.)	
Finding information on LGBTQIA community services in French	
Finding information on LGBTQIA social networks in French	
Finding a school for my children	
Finding child-minding services	
Finding services for my parents	

**LINGUISTIC AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

Limited English-language skills	
Limited French-language skills	
Limited professional skills or experience	
Non-recognized professional skills or experience	

SOCIAL LIFE

Difficulté à m’impliquer dans des réseaux sociaux	
Sentiment d’isolement	
Absence de réseaux de soutien LGBTQIA en français	

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination linked to my sexual orientation	
Discrimination linked to my gender/sexual identity	
Discrimination linked to my immigration status	
Discrimination linked to the fact that I am Francophone	
Discrimination linked to my race or my ethnic origin	

**38. How often did you consult the following information sources to find out about settlement IN GENERAL in Ontario?** (Please check only one option per line)

Types of services	Never	A few times a year	Once a month	Once a week	Every-day
Internet					
Friend(s)					
Family					
My ethno-cultural community					
Francophone community or organization					
Anglophone community or organization					
Francophone LGBTQIA community or organization					
Anglophone LGBTQIA community or organization					

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Educational institution (training centre, college, university)					
Workplace					
LGBTQIA organization's newsletter or info mailing					
My ethno-cultural community's newspaper, radio or television					
Other - please specify:					

**39. How often did you consult the following information sources to find out about the LGBTQIA community in Ontario?** (Please check only one option per line)

Types of services	Never	A few times a year	Once a month	Once a week	Every- day
Internet					
Friend(s)					
Family					
My ethno-cultural community					
Francophone community or organization					
Anglophone community or organization					
Francophone LGBTQIA community or organization					

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Anglophone LGBTQIA community or organization					
Educational institution (training centre, college, university)					
Workplace					
LGBTQIA organization's newsletter or info mailing					
My ethno-cultural community's newspaper, radio or television					
Other - please specify:					

*Thanks for having taken the time to fill out this survey questionnaire – we really appreciate it!*

*If you're interested in participating in an interview about your needs and experiences, please contact:*

*Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and Research Coordinator*

*at [egates@ocasi.org](mailto:egates@ocasi.org) or 416-322-4950 x227.*

*Your contribution will allow for a better understanding of the needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, and to develop settlement services for them.*

## B. Survey Questionnaire – Practitioners

*FrancoQueer / OCASI*

*Assessing the Settlement and Integration Needs of Francophone LGBTQIA New Immigrants and Refugees.*

*Practitioners' Survey Questionnaire.*

### Goals:

There is currently very little information on the settlement and integration experiences and needs of Francophone LGBTQIA new immigrants and refugees in Ontario. Your participation in this survey will offer important data to raise awareness at government and service provider level to the needs of this group of people and to develop services for its members.

This needs assessment is made possible through a partnership between OCASI – the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants and FrancoQueer, and with a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

### Eligibility to participate in the survey:

Individuals who provide settlement and integration services to Francophone immigrants and refugees in Ontario are eligible to participate in this survey. It is not necessary to have personally served LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in the past nor to be an expert in this area in order to complete the questionnaire. The expression “immigrants and refugees” includes asylum seekers, people without status, temporary foreign workers and international students who wish to settle in Canada. Please note that the LGBTQIA acronym includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people.

## **Instructions:**

Please fill out this questionnaire only once. You will need about 10 minutes to complete it.

## **Confidentiality:**

This survey is confidential and anonymous – you will not be required to provide your name nor your organization’s name or the city where you live. Only Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and Research Coordinator and Julie Lassonde, lawyer and consultant hired for this study by FrancoQueer will have access to the questionnaires.

## **Risks and benefits:**

This research project is considered a low risk endeavour. That said, some individuals may feel uncomfortable to talk about LGBTQIA-related matters. If you are concerned that your participation may harm you, please do not hesitate to talk about this with the person that gave you the survey questionnaire. We admire your courage and are very grateful for your participation in this important study. A summary of the final report will be published online – on OCASI and FrancoQueer’s websites.

## **Voluntary participation:**

Your participation is voluntary. You can stop your participation in this survey at any moment.

## **Do you have questions about this research?**

If you have questions about this project or about your participation in it, please do not hesitate to be in touch with the person responsible for it: Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and

Research Coordinator at 416-322-4950, extension 227; egates@ocasi.org; 110 Eglinton Ave West, suite 200, Toronto, M4R 1A3.

## Do you agree to participate in this survey?:

**Consentez-vous à participer au présent sondage?** (Please circle only one option)

Yes / No

.....

**1. Does your organization offer settlement services in French in Ontario?**

- Yes / No (Electronic instruction: if the answer is "no", the questionnaire ends)

**2. Please specify the type of organization:**

- The organization offers services in French only.
- The organization offers mainly services in French but also services in English or other languages.
- The organization offers mainly services in English but also services in French or other languages.

**3. What is your position within the organization?**

- Frontline worker (direct services)
- Coordinator/ Manager
- Executive Director
- Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. For how many years have you been working for this organization?**

- Less than a year
- 1 to 3 years
- 4 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 10 to 14 years
- 15 years and more

**5. In what type of community is your organization located?**

- Large centre
- Medium-sized centre
- Small centre
- Rural area

**6. In what region is your organization located?**

- **Centre-East:** Barrie, Bradford, Durham region (Ajax, Oshawa, Pickering, Whitby) Peterborough, York region (Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan)
- **Centre-West:** Peel region, including Brampton, Halton, Malton, Mississauga and Oakville
- **East:** Belleville, Kingston, Ottawa
- **North:** Kenora, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay
- **South:** Beamsville, Brantford, Cambridge, Fort Erie, Guelph, Hamilton, Kitchener, Niagara, St. Catharines, Waterloo, Welland
- **Toronto:** City of Toronto
- **West:** Chatham, Leamington, London, Sarnia, Windsor-Essex

**7. What types of settlement and integration services does your organization offer?**

(Please check all that apply)

- Emotional support by a settlement counsellor
- Information about community or government services
- Referrals to community or government services
- Help to find a school for their children
- Help to find training programs
- Help to find housing
- Help to find psychological and physical health services
- Help to find services for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Help to find legal services
- Help filling out immigration / refugee status forms
- Linguistic interpretation (verbal)
- Translation (written)
- Workshops or group information sessions on settlement in Ontario
- Newcomer support group
- LGBTQIA newcomer support group
- English-language training

- French-language training
- Job-specific language training in French in a classroom or in the workplace
- Job-specific language training in English in a classroom or in the workplace
- Other – please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Does your organization offer specialized services for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees?**

- Yes / No

**9. When it comes to LGBTQIA people, what is the best way to describe the reality in your organization?** (Please check only one)

- There are a lot of LGBTQIA clients and staff members who are open about their sexual orientation or their gender / sexual identity.
- There are some clients and staff members who identify as LGBTQIA, but who are not necessarily comfortable to share this information with the organization as a whole.
- I do not know whether our organization has LGBTQIA clients or staff members.

**10. In terms of referring your clients to LGBTQIA services and sharing LGBTQIA resources with them, what is the best way to describe the reality in your organization?** (Please check only one)

- We have a list of LGBTQIA resources. In addition, such a list is part of the longer list of resources provided to all our clients; thus, clients do not have to ask for such information – we provide it automatically.
- We have a list of LGBTQIA resources, but we only share it with those clients who seem to be LGBTQIA or who identify as such.
- We do not have a list of LGBTQIA resources. We do not know anything about local LGBTQIA resources and we have never referred clients to LGBTQIA services.
- I do not know whether we have a list of LGBTQIA resources.

**11. Have you ever offered services to a Francophone newcomer that you perceived to be perhaps a member of the LGBTQIA community or who openly identified as an LGBTQIA individual?**

- Yes / No (Electronic instruction: if the answer is “No”, participant is directed to question 13.)

**12. Did you find it difficult to respond to their sexual orientation or gender/sexual identity-related needs?**

Very difficult 1	Difficult 2	Neutral 3	Easy 4	Very easy 5

**13. What kinds of difficulties did you encounter when offering services to this person?**

(Please check all that apply)

- I never got any training on LGBTQIA people’s experiences and needs.
- I am not aware of existing services that respond to their sexual orientation or gender/sexual identity-related needs.
- I am not very comfortable with this aspect of their identity.
- There are no LGBTQIA settlement services in my region (services for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees – referrals to other services, information on housing, support group, etc.).
- There are no French-language LGBTQIA settlement services in my region (services for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees – referrals to other services, information on housing, support group, etc.).
- There are no LGBTQIA services in my region (services for all the LGBTQIA population such as psychological or physical health, social activities, etc.).
- There are no French-language LGBTQIA services in my region (services for all the LGBTQIA population such as psychological or physical health, social activities, etc.).
- Other, please specify:
- Non applicable

**14. Which of the following sentences best describes your organization’s anti-discrimination policy:**

- Our anti-discrimination policy explicitly mentions gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation as protected grounds, in line with the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- We have a policy that states that human rights are protected in our organization, but this policy does not explicitly mention gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.
- We have an anti-discrimination policy that explicitly mentions gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, but this policy is not implemented in our practices.

- I do not know the details around our anti-discrimination policy.
- We do not have an official anti-discrimination policy.

**15. Which of the following sentences describes best your organization’s confidentiality policy:**

- Our policy comprises an explicit prohibition of disclosing a staff member or client’s sexual orientation or gender/sexual identity without their consent.
- We have a confidentiality policy, but it does not explicitly mention sexual orientation or gender/sexual identity.
- I do not know the details around our confidentiality policy.
- We do not have a confidentiality policy.

**16. Which of the following sentences best describes your organization as a LGBTQIA-positive space:**

- We have “positive space” posters in all the languages in which we offer services.
- We have “positive space” posters in French only.
- We do not have any posters indicating that we are a “positive space”.
- I am not familiar with the term “positive space”.

**17. In your opinion, overall, is the Francophone community in your region welcoming towards LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees?**

Not welcoming at all 1	Not welcoming 2	Somewhat welcoming 3	Welcoming 4	Very welcoming 5	I don’t know

Do you have any comments to add? \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Selon vous, en général, est-ce que les communautés des pays d’origine / ethnoculturelles francophones de votre clientèle sont accueillantes envers leurs membres LGBTQIA dans votre région?**

Not welcoming at all 1	Not welcoming 2	Somewhat welcoming 3	Welcoming 4	Very welcoming 5	I don't know

Do you have any comments to add? \_\_\_\_\_

**19. In your opinion, overall, is your organization welcoming towards LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in your region?**

Not welcoming at all 1	Not welcoming 2	Somewhat welcoming 3	Welcoming 4	Very welcoming 5	I don't know

Do you have any comments to add? \_\_\_\_\_

**20. In your opinion, what services would be most useful for Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees?**

Please rate these services from 1 to 10, starting with 1 (the most useful service) and until 10 (the least useful service). If you do not know, please indicate "I don't know" by checking the corresponding space below the table.

Services	Rate from 1 to 10
Help to find housing	
Help with immigration issues (legal services, help to fill out forms, etc.)	
Help to find employment or financial support	
Psychological or physical health services	
Services for people living with HIV/AIDS	

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Discussion group to talk about LGBTQIA issues	
Social activities	
Religious or spiritual activities	
English-language training	
French-language training	
	√
I don't know	

21. In your opinion, what are the most important needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees? (Please describe briefly)

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*Thank you for having taken the time to fill out this survey questionnaire - we really appreciate it!*

*If you are interested in participating in an interview about your needs and experiences, please contact:*

*Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and Research Coordinator*

*at [egates@ocasi.org](mailto:egates@ocasi.org) or 416-322-4950 x227.*

*Your contribution will allow for a better understanding of the needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, and to develop settlement services for them.*

## C. Interview and Focus Group Questionnaire – Immigrants and Refugees<sup>13</sup>

### Questionnaire for Focus Groups with Francophone LGBTQIA Immigrants and Refugees

The facilitator will welcome participants and will offer an overview of the project. She will explain the goal of the focus group – to help FrancoQueer and OCASI better understand the settlement and integration needs of Francophone LGBTQIA<sup>14</sup> immigrants and refugees and develop services to meet such needs. The facilitator will briefly explain the rules to be followed during exchanges: a safe space will be created that fosters sharing experiences, ensuring confidentiality and respectful listening. She will explain that participation is voluntary – and that participants can put an end to their participation at any time. She will mention too that participants can consent (or not) to the audio recording of discussions, and that transcriptions of the recorded discussions and/or notes taken during exchanges will be kept confidential until the research report is completed – at which point they will be destroyed. Consent forms will be distributed, signed and collected. Once the focus group is done, each participant will receive \$40.

### Questions for the focus groups

1. Could you please introduce yourselves – your name, your country-of-origin and since when have you been in Ontario?
2. When you arrived in Ontario, what were your settlement needs? What were your most important challenges? What are your current needs?
  - Social life and community
  - French language

## The settlement and integration needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in Ontario

- Identity issues: LGBTQIA, sex, race/ethnicity, immigration status, etc.
  - Housing, employment & health
3. Since you arrived in Ontario, did you receive any help to meet such needs? If yes  
– what kind of help? Was it useful?
    - Was that help offered in French?
    - Was it adapted to your LGBTQIA identities?
  4. Did you feel included in the different communities you have engaged with?
    - Francophone community, LGBTQIA community, ethno-cultural community, etc.
  5. What services should be offered to Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees to help them settle and integrate in Ontario?
    - How should these services be offered?
    - When would be the right moment to offer them?
  6. Is there anything else you would like to share?

## D. Interview and Focus Group Questionnaire – Practitioners

### Questionnaire for Focus Groups With Practitioners Serving Francophone LGBTQIA Immigrants and Refugees<sup>15</sup>

The facilitator will welcome participants and will offer an overview of the project. She will explain the goal of the focus group – to help FrancoQueer and OCASI better understand the settlement and integration needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees and develop services to meet such needs. The facilitator will briefly explain the rules to be followed during exchanges: a safe space will be created that fosters sharing experiences, ensuring confidentiality and respectful listening. She will explain that participation is voluntary – and that participants can put an end to their participation at any time. She will mention too that participants can consent (or not) to the audio recording of discussions, and that transcriptions of the recorded discussions and/or notes taken during exchanges will be kept confidential until the research report is completed – at which point they will be destroyed. Consent forms will be distributed, signed and collected.

### Questions for the focus groups

1. Could you please introduce yourselves – your name, the organization you work for and your position?
2. In your experience, what are the settlement and integration needs of Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees? What are their most important challenges? Are their needs at the moment of arrival different than their needs years later?
  - Social life and community
  - French language
  - Identity issues: LGBTQIA, sex, race/ethnicity, immigration status, etc.
  - Housing, employment & health

3. Do you offer these persons services to meet their needs? If yes, what services do you offer them? If not, where do you refer them?
  - Are these services offered in French?
  - Are these services adapted to their LGBTQIA identities? If yes, in what way(s)?
  - Is it difficult for LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees to access services that meet their needs?
4. Do you think these persons feel included in the various communities they engage with?
  - Francophone community, LGBTQIA community, ethno-cultural community, etc.
5. What services should be offered to Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees in order to help them settle and integrate in Ontario?
  - How should these services be offered?
  - When would be the right moment to offer them?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share?

# E. Consent / Confidentiality Form

## CONSENT FORM

### Project Title:

Assessing the Settlement and Integration Needs of Francophone LGBTQIA New Immigrants and Refugees.

### Goals:

There is currently very little information on the settlement and integration experiences and needs of Francophone LGBTQIA new immigrants and refugees in Ontario. Similarly, there is very little information available on the lived experiences of LGBTQIA people who live in the minority Francophone community in Canada.

In such a context, this project aims to:

- Better understand Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees' situation and needs in Ontario.
- Evaluate the best ways to respond to their needs.
- Understand ethno-cultural communities and Francophone institutions' perceptions regarding these persons.
- Raise awareness among ethno-cultural communities, settlement practitioners and institutions serving the Francophone community in general regarding the realities facing these persons, so that communities, practitioners and institutions can better grasp LGBTQIA newcomers' needs, refer them to appropriate organizations and thus better respond to their needs.

This needs assessment is made possible through a partnership between OCASI – the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants and FrancoQueer, and with a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

## **What we will ask from you:**

The focus group or the interview will last between 1 and 2 hours. It will be audio recorded and documented via written notes.

## **Risks and benefits:**

This research project is considered a low risk endeavour. That said, some individuals may feel uncomfortable to talk about their LGBTQIA-related experiences. If you are concerned that your participation may harm you, please do not hesitate to talk about this with the person that gave you the survey questionnaire. We admire your courage and are very grateful for your participation in this important study.

## **Voluntary participation:**

Your participation is voluntary. You can stop your participation in this focus group or in the interview at any moment. If you decide to withdraw from the focus group or from the interview, your decision will not have a harmful impact on your relationship with the researchers, the needs assessment project or the partner organization – neither now nor in the future.

## **Confidentiality:**

The information you will share in the context of the focus group or the interview will remain confidential. Your name will not be cited in any report, training material or publication that may stem from this research. Quotations that will be included in the final report will be anonymous and they will exclude any reference that could identify you.

## Research results dissemination:

We want to ensure that the information gathered in the context of this project is used to improve the services offered to Francophone LGBTQIA immigrants and refugees, and to raise awareness among ethno-cultural communities as well as practitioners and institutions that serve the Francophone population in Ontario. The data from the focus groups will serve to write a final report to be submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. A summary of such a report will be published online – on OCASI and FrancoQueer’s websites. The data will also be used to develop educational materials.

## Do you have questions about this research?

If you have questions about this project or about your participation in it, please do not hesitate to be in touch with the person responsible for it: Erika Gates-Gasse, OCASI Senior Policy and Research Coordinator at 416-322-4950, extension 227; egates@ocasi.org; 110 Eglinton Ave West, suite 200, Toronto, M4R 1A3.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in this focus group or interview. I understand the nature of this project and I want to participate in it. My signature below indicates my consent.

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Participant’s signature

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Date

<sup>13</sup> In the context of this needs assessment, the term “immigrant and refugee persons” also included refugee claimants, people without status, visitors, temporary migrant workers and international students who wish to settle in Canada.

<sup>14</sup> The acronym LGBTQIA included lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, berdache, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual people.

<sup>15</sup> In the context of this needs assessment, the term “immigrant and refugee persons” also included refugee claimants, people without status, visitors, temporary migrant workers and international students who wish to settle in Canada.



