

Meet our co-chairs

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Paula Knight

CEO

**Immigrant Services Association of
Nova Scotia (ISANS) and
Chair of the Atlantic Region
Association of Immigrant Serving
Agencies (ARAISA)**

Paula Knight is the Chief Executive Officer of the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), Atlantic Canada's largest immigrant settlement services provider, and Chair of the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA).

With over 25 years of executive leadership across healthcare, technology, social housing, and the nonprofit sector, Paula is known for driving inclusive, system-level change through strategic innovation, human-centered design, and a deep commitment to social impact. She has held executive roles at Microsoft, Cancer Care Ontario, and Toronto Community Housing, where she spearheaded transformative initiatives that advanced equity, expanded digital access, and strengthened community resilience across complex systems.

At ISANS, Paula is redefining the future of immigrant settlement in Nova Scotia by strategically aligning services with evolving immigration policies, shifting labour market demands, and the diverse aspirations of newcomers. She drives cross-sector collaboration and service innovation, designing inclusive programs that empower immigrants to thrive—fueling economic growth and building vibrant communities.

Paula's contributions have earned national recognition, including the Queen Elizabeth II Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals and Microsoft's prestigious Chairman Award. Paula is passionate about mentoring women in leadership and is a founding member of the Initiative for Women in Business, Judy Project at the Rotman School of Management, and a contributing author of *The Collective Wisdom of High Performing Women*.

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Emmanuel Nahimana

Deputy Director General
La Fédération acadienne de la
Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) (*The
Acadian Federation of Nova
Scotia*)

Originally from Burundi, Mr. Nahimana arrived in Canada in 2001. He holds a licence (Bachelor's degree) in French Language and Literature from the University of Burundi, as well as a Master's degree in Education and Diversity from Simon Fraser University.

Mr. Nahimana has served as Manager of Francophone Immigration for Nova Scotia since 2013. In this role, he developed strategic plans, identified and addressed emerging immigration trends, managed contribution agreements, and coordinated funding-related activities. Mr. Nahimana also worked for Canadian Heritage for one year as a Senior Advisor of the *Community Support, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Program*.

Meet our guest speakers

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The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab

Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab was first elected as the Member of Parliament for Halifax West in 2021, and was re-elected in April 2025. She was appointed Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship in May 2025.

Minister Diab was elected to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly in 2013, and re-elected in 2017, serving on the Executive Council during both terms. In addition to serving as Minister of Immigration, she was the province's first female Attorney General and Minister of Justice. She also held the roles of Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, and Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

Prior to entering politics, Minister Diab was a small business owner, lawyer and active volunteer. She practised law in Halifax for more than 20 years, served on a number of adjudicative boards and was awarded the Queen's Counsel designation for service to the legal profession.

Her extensive community involvement and volunteerism earned her numerous honours, including Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal, the Progress Women of Excellence Award, the Outstanding Professional of the Year Award from the Canadian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce, and the Lorita Star Award from the Council of Arab League Ambassadors.

Minister Diab holds a Bachelor of Arts from Saint Mary's University, and a Master of Public Administration and a Law Degree from Dalhousie University. She is also trained in mediation, collaborative family law and interest-based negotiation.

Meet our guest speakers

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The Honourable Nolan Young
Minister of Labour, Skills and
Immigration
Government of Nova Scotia

The Honourable Nolan Young was first elected to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly as MLA for Shelburne in 2021 and was re-elected in 2024.

He was appointed to the Executive Council of Nova Scotia in December of 2024 as the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration; the Minister responsible for the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act; and Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Act (except Part II).

He is a former Councillor and Deputy Mayor for Shelburne, as well as a former instructor at NSCC Shelburne Campus.

Prior to government, he worked many years at various levels in construction.

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Corinne Prince
Special Advisor
ACS-Metropolis

Corinne retired in July of 2023 after almost 33 years with the federal government including time with the CRTC, the Secretary of State, Human Resources Development Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Over her career, Corinne lead the growth and transformation of a number of federal programs including the Canada Student Loans Program, the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, Labour Mobility programming, the Going to Canada Immigration Portal, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, the National Occupational Classification system, Labour Market Information, Career Information, Essential Skills programming, the Settlement Program and the Resettlement Program. She also lead legislative changes to the Canada Student Loans Act, the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act, the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, and the Official Languages Act.



Patrick MacKenzie,
CEO
Immigrant Employment Council of
BC

Patrick MacKenzie has devoted his career to the intersection of people and the economy. For him, immigration is more than a policy area—it's a pathway to creating a more vibrant, prosperous economy where people and communities flourish. Patrick believes that when individuals succeed, so does society, and he has championed this vision across his work in public service from coast to coast.

With almost 20 years in public service, including a decade at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Patrick held pivotal roles in both Ottawa and Vancouver, driving progress with private and public sector partners on key issues affecting Indigenous and immigrant populations. His expertise extends into immigrant economic integration, credential and skills recognition, and labour mobility—areas he sees as essential for unlocking Canada's full potential. As an advocate for thoughtful dialogue, Patrick's connections give him a unique view of the realities and aspirations of both communities and the broader economy. His people-first approach is evident in his leadership and in the lasting partnerships he builds with employers and immigrants.

With this commitment to growth through inclusivity, Patrick continues to meaningfully contribute to economic and social progress centred on human potential.

Meet our plenary speakers

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Rob Roberts
Editor in Chief at National Post

Rob Roberts, who has held senior editorial positions at The Canadian Press since late 2015, is leaving the news service to become editor-in-chief at the National Post.

Mr. Roberts began his career in radio before he moved to editorial positions at newspapers in Halifax, Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto. He was one of the Toronto-based National Post's original staffers and was its national editor prior to his move to The Canadian Press in December, 2015.

Mr. Roberts was chief of The Canadian Press's Atlantic bureau until he moved to the agency's head office in Toronto in May on an interim basis to assist Andrea Baillie, the agency's managing editor and acting editor-in-chief. In that capacity, Mr. Roberts co-ordinated coverage of stories by various bureaus and departments in consultation with other Canadian Press senior managers.

Meet our plenary speakers

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Tony Keller
Columnist
The Globe & Mail

Tony joined The Globe in 1991 as an editorial writer; over a career of more than 30 years he has also served as editor of The Financial Post Magazine, managing editor of Maclean's and a TV news anchor on BNN (now BNN-Bloomberg). He returned to The Globe in 2013 to become the paper's editorials editor and remained in that position until 2022.

Originally from Montreal, he's a graduate of Duke University and Yale Law School and has also been a visiting fellow at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law and the Wilson Center in Washington D.C. He's been nominated three times for the National Newspaper Award for editorial writing, winning in 2016.



Anil Arora,
Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy,
John F Kennedy School of
Government, Harvard University,
Chief Statistician of Canada,
Statistics Canada 2016 to 2024

Anil Arora has dedicated his professional career to partnering with the business sector, academia, internationally and with all three levels of government, building a culture of innovation, successfully delivering complex and transformational digital solutions, strengthened consumer and citizen trust, and increased organizational relevance and impact. Anil was appointed as the Chief Statistician of Canada in September 2016, overseeing the country's preeminent data agency, where he led modernizing its digital governance, technical and data infrastructure. He co-authored and helped steer the Government of Canada's data strategy.

With significant experience in the private and public sectors, as well as leading influential international forums in the OECD and the United Nations, Anil has helped shape the data and digital landscape domestically and globally. He currently provides consultative services globally with the World Bank, helping countries build robust data and digital strategies. Anil has advised CEO's, Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, Premiers, Deputy Ministers, and led Business Missions internationally. Anil has authored several papers, is a regular keynote speaker and lecturer, and a sought-after thought leader.. Anil has led large and complex organizations with multi-billion dollar budgets and tens of thousands of employees. Anil's leadership spans senior strategic, science, policy, program delivery and regulatory roles in the oil and gas sector, mining and critical minerals, forestry, nuclear, public health, drug safety, food, medical devices, and natural health products. Anil has earned numerous accolades, including being named Outstanding Innovator (2023), One of the Top 25 Immigrants in Canada (2022), Policy Maker (2022), as well as receiving several Leadership Awards by the Business Community and the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (2009-2024).

Anil is passionate about evidence-informed decision making, responsibly using data and technology to create value, assisting organizations in leveraging diversity and inclusion as a competitive advantage, and building healthy and sustainable communities for the benefit of all citizens.

Anil holds a BSC (Petroleum Geology) from the University of Alberta (1985), a Graduate Certificate in Public Sector Leadership and Governance from the University of Ottawa (2009), is a Graduate of the Advanced Leadership Program at the Canada School of Public Service, with further studies in Computing Science and Management.

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Dr. Rupa Banerjee
Canada Chair in Economic
Inclusion, Employment &
Entrepreneurship of Canada's
Immigrants, Toronto
Metropolitan University

Dr. Rupa Banerjee is the Canada Research Chair in Economic inclusion, Employment and Entrepreneurship of Canada's Immigrants and Professor of Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour. Her primary research interest lies in the employment integration of new immigrants to Canada. She is particularly interested in the institutional barriers facing new immigrants in the Canadian labour market.

In addition, she is interested in workplace diversity and ethno-racial discrimination, particularly as it applies to second-generation immigrants. Dr. Banerjee's research has appeared in such journals as *International Migration Review*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *Journal of Labor Research and Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations*.



Dr. Ather Akbari

Professor

Chair Atlantic Research Group
on Economics of Immigration,
Aging and Diversity, Saint Mary's
University

Dr. Ather Akbari is professor of economics at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada. He is a labour economist with research interest in issues related to economics of immigration and education. He has published in several peer-reviewed academic journals on public finance and labour market impacts of immigration in Canada and has also conducted immigration research projects for federal and provincial governments in Canada. He has testified thrice in front of the Parliamentary Standing Committees on immigration.

His recent major projects include: 1) Immigration in Nova Scotia: Who comes, Who Stays, Who Leaves and Why? 2) Impacts of Provincial and Territorial Immigration programs in Canada; 3) Satisfaction and Well-being of International Students in Atlantic Canada. His on-going project is entitled Twenty-Five years of Immigration in Atlantic Canada in Statistics. National and international newspapers such as The Globe and Mail, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, New York Times and The Economist magazine have cited his immigration research. He chairs the Atlantic Research Group on Economics of Immigration, Aging and Diversity (ARGEIAD) and has been the Academic Coordinator of the Master of Applied Economics (MAE) program and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Applied Economics program (PBCAE) at the Sobey School of Business.



Catherine Scott

Assistant Deputy Minister,
Settlement and Citizens,
Immigration, Refugees and
Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

Catherine Scott has been the Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Citizens at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) since March 2022.

Her responsibilities span the integration of newcomers into Canada and their transition to citizenship and obtaining passports. Catherine joined IRCC in 2019 as Director General, Refugee Affairs, and was then Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy before taking on her current role.

Prior to this, she spent a decade working at Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) on both labour market and social policy issues. During this time, she led a significant renewal of the federal homelessness program. Catherine led extensive consultations to develop the first Government of Canada social innovation and social finance strategy. She has also managed the Foreign Credential Recognition Program and launched the first federal initiative to support capacity-building in Black Canadian communities. Catherine has also worked for the Commissioner of Official Languages, the Privy Council Office and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Catherine holds an honours Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and French from Glendon College, York University and an M.A. in International Relations from Université Laval.

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Shamira Madhany
Managing Director Canada and
Deputy Executive Director,
World Education Services (WES)

Shamira Madhany joined WES in 2018 after more than two decades of government service in Ontario. Her last position was Assistant Deputy Minister for Health, Education, and Social Policy, in the Cabinet Office. She also served as Chief Diversity and Accessibility Officer, ensuring that 62,000 employees met accessibility and inclusion goals.

Shamira has extensive experience working with employer associations, licensing bodies, non-profit organizations, and the post-secondary sector. She served as the chief architect of several government programs that enable internationally educated professionals to obtain employment in their fields.

Shamira is a guest lecturer at Queen's University and the University of Toronto Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. She also serves on the boards of Windmill Microlending, Touchstone Institute, Herzing College Toronto, and the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC).



Myriam Mekni
CEO
Catholic Centre for Immigrants
Ottawa

Myriam Mekni is the Executive Director of the Catholic Centre for Immigrants, Ottawa. Previously, she served as Managing Director of Rising Tide Community Initiatives and as the former Executive Director of MAGMA, the Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area. Before immigrating to Canada from her home country of Tunisia, Ms. Mekni worked for Apple, the British Council, and the U.S. Embassy.

In her recent role, Ms. Mekni brings more than a track record of leadership experience. Dedicated to empowering new and established Canadians alike, Ms. Mekni's vision is informed by a spirit of inclusion that is friendly, informed, and enduring. Ms. Mekni served as Chair of Greater Moncton's Local Immigration Partnership. Recently designated one of the most inspiring immigrants in the Maritimes, and one of the Top 20 Under 40 in the Greater Moncton Area, Ms. Mekni is also a passionate advocate for women's rights and proudly sits on the governance committee for the New Brunswick Women's Council where she also acts as interim co-chair.

In August 2021, Ms. Mekni was appointed to be a member of the Human Rights Commission of New Brunswick. She also co-chairs The Community Task Force on Homelessness and Downtown Security, which was created to mobilize stakeholders and resources to meet the challenge of homelessness and social issues.



Anita Stellinga
Chief Executive Officer
COSTI Immigrant Services

Anita Stellinga is the Chief Executive Officer of COSTI Immigrant Services, bringing over 25 years of leadership experience in the not-for-profit sector. Her career is deeply rooted in settlement and community services, and as a former newcomer to Canada, Anita understands firsthand the critical role organizations like COSTI play in helping people build new lives.

Anita began her career on the frontlines of the settlement sector, supporting language training, refugee services, and mental health programs. She later joined United Way Peel Region, advancing to senior leadership and serving as Interim CEO. During her tenure, she played a pivotal role in the historic merger that created United Way Greater Toronto, the largest United Way in the world, strengthening operations, strategy, and community impact.

A champion of collaboration and systems-level change, Anita co-founded the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group and co-chaired the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, shaping regional responses to poverty, equity, and inclusion. Prior to joining COSTI, she served as Vice President of Corporate Communications and Public Policy at United Way Greater Toronto, where she led initiatives in governance, advocacy, and equity, including the organization's Reconciliation and Equity Action Plan.

Anita holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Toronto at Mississauga. She currently chairs the Governance Committee at Partners Community Health and is a past Chair of STRIDE, a mental health agency serving Peel and Halton.