

Federal Election Primer 2019

Immigration is an important issue in this federal election.

Waterloo Region has a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees. In the 2016 Census, 22.6% of the population were immigrants and refugees. New international migration is the main driver of population growth in Ontario. Immigration is projected to account for all net labour force growth and 1/3 of the economic growth rate in Canada between now and 2040. While many immigrants find early success in Canada and Waterloo Region, some face challenges to settling, working, and developing a strong sense of belonging. Members of Parliament have an important role in ensuring that Waterloo Region can fully leverage the contributions of immigrants and refugees to community and economic development.

Suggested candidate questions

The Conference Board of Canada recently reported that between 2018 and 2040, 1.6 million fewer people will become workers than the number of people exiting the labour force and that immigration will account for all of Canada's net labour force growth. Immigration is both a social and an economic imperative for Canada and communities like Waterloo Region. If elected, will you support increasing immigration levels in Canada to address population growth and labour force needs and how will you work with Waterloo Region's municipalities to help meet the same through robust immigration strategies that attract more immigrants to mid-sized communities?

Lack of affordable housing is a major challenge for many residents of Waterloo Region. In a recent survey of almost 1,100 immigrants and refugees living here, 29% said that finding affordable housing was one of their biggest challenges in the last year. In addition to challenges to accessing affordable housing faced by the broader population, newcomers face the added barriers of lack credit or work history in Canada, references, etc. If elected, will you support the continuation of the national housing strategy and additional investment in the creation of affordable housing suitable to population needs in communities like Waterloo Region?

There is a talent crisis in Waterloo Region. In the 2019 EmployerOne survey of 542 employers, 64% had difficulties hiring for positions in the previous year. Immigrants are a potential solution to the hiring needs of employers, yet unemployment rates among recent immigrants are twice as high as longer established immigrants and Canadian born individuals, and in a 2019 survey of almost 1,100 immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region 46% said finding work was one of their biggest challenges in the last year. If elected, will you support policies that enable more employers to hire more immigrants suited to their positions faster and how will you support immigrants and refugees already in the community to find meaningful work?

Despite the fact that immigration is imperative for Canada's future growth and prosperity, recent national polls have found that 40% of people believe immigration levels are too high and that Canada admits too many visible minority immigrants through its managed immigration system. In a 2019 statistically reliable survey of Waterloo Region residents, 34% (representing over 180,000 people) did not agree that immigration has a positive impact on their community. If elected, will you firmly support immigration to Canada and Waterloo Region and how will you use your role to promote positive perceptions of immigration and refugees?