Extensive research and practical experience tell us that diverse workforces equate with increased productivity, profitability, market share, accessibility of international markets, client satisfaction, creativity and problem solving and a competitive edge in attracting and retaining talent. On January 1, 2015, the Federal Government launched its new Express Entry System of immigration as a means to get more international skilled labour into jobs in Canada. Yet today we still see many highly educated and skilled international job-seekers already present in Canada who are underemployed or unable to access work at the same time as many employers are experiencing labour shortages and are unable to find the right talent.

Waterloo Region is no exception. Bridging the divide between available labour and available jobs is one of the central priorities of the Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, by raising awareness about current policies and programs and their impact and by supporting employers, employment service providers and international job-seekers to access the resources they need for success.

This newsletter includes information about powerful programs and resources in Waterloo Region including the EmployerOne survey and other labour market tools of the Workforce Planning Board and the YMCA’s Mentorship Program. We are excited to profile a couple who immigrated to Canada as refugees from Serbia to become highly successful business owners contributing to a vibrant downtown Kitchener. You will also find updates on the people involved in and work currently being done by our Partnership and information about upcoming events.

A big thank you goes to our amazing partners who contributed content. We hope you enjoy this issue of the Immigration Partnership Newsletter. And do let us know if you have creative ideas for matching more international job-seekers with meaningful employment in Waterloo Region.

Tara Bedard
Manager, Immigration Partnership
The Importance of Labour Market Information
Submitted by Carol Simpson, Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

The Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin’s latest labour market report was released in October 2014. The report, entitled “Shaping Today’s Workforce for Tomorrow’s Workplace”, reviewed local labour market conditions and conducted analysis of clients accessing the services of Employment Ontario – provincially funded services to provide employment/training supports to the under/unemployed.

Five key priority areas were identified, one of which is the need to upgrade the skills of current workers and the available labour force. Skills and training requirements can shift quite dramatically as we saw happen in the manufacturing sector after the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009. Constantly changing technology also has an impact on jobs. The need for workers who can understand, use and maintain sophisticated technology in the workplace continues to grow while the need for unskilled labour continues to decline.

Unskilled workers can still find employment opportunities although there are fewer of them. Unskilled positions are also more likely to be temporary, part-time or contract. Workers in this situation need all of their time just to make a living and often are unable to take advantage of re-training and/or upgrading opportunities for that reason. This leaves them stuck in a constant cycle of work and unemployment. It is hoped that the new Canada Ontario Jobs Grant (COJG) will provide training dollars to businesses to upgrade and upskill employees while they are employed to maintain and enhance their employability within the labour market and potentially enable lower skilled workers to break that cycle.

Another priority identified in the report is the need for more effective distribution of current labour market information. The need for current labour market information has always been an issue but is even more important now. People make decisions around education, training and mobility, including immigration, based on their understanding of the local or regional labour market. That information is often not based on solid evidence or the realities of the local environment and is often anecdotal rather than based on fact.

What was in demand five years ago from an employment perspective is not what is in demand now and not having access to current labour market information can be costly. For example, Heavy Equipment Operator was very much in demand several years ago. The demand for training in this field continues to be popular yet the unemployment rate for this occupation is high for new graduates.

As a planning body, having current and evidence based information is crucial and, since the loss of the long form census, has been very difficult to obtain. As a result, we have to be more creative about how we gather workforce information from businesses. The Workforce Planning Board is now responsible for the first annual EmployerOne survey being conducted in January 2015.

Twenty community partners have already agreed to support the initiative and share the results of this annual local survey of employers in Waterloo Wellington and Dufferin counties. Partners include economic development, educators/trainers, community agencies and business organizations including Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and the Immigration Partnership.

The survey asks questions about an employer’s current workforce, hires, separations and recruitment methods as well as education, skills and training needs. By filling out the survey, a more robust analysis and in-depth vision of both
YMCA Mentorship Program
Submitted by Marilena Benak, YMCA Mentorship Specialist

The YMCA Mentorship Program matches experienced professionals from Canada with internationally trained immigrants in Waterloo Region for the purpose of empowering newcomers with professional backgrounds. Looking back, 2014 proved to be a very productive and rewarding year for the Mentorship Program and for internationally trained immigrants: 130 new mentees and 45 new mentors were registered into the Program and a total of 138 matches were achieved between mentors and mentees.

In addition to these matches, a number of supporting sessions are offered for mentees within the Program on emerging topics in the field of job searching such as informational interview sessions in groups or one-to-one, sector specific sessions (i.e., Banking, Food Industry, Regulatory Bodies, etc.), social media tools for job searching and mock telephone interviews. We also offer unique Mentoring in Motion sessions every other month with the support of Royal Bank of Canada, in their premises. Overall, over 70 per cent of participants in the Program are able to secure employment in their field.

We recognize the support and preparations our clients receive through employment services and, at the same time, consider mentoring instrumental in the process of enabling participants to secure the job of their choice and in their professional field. We would like to thank all of our mentees, mentors, collaborators, partners as well as our peer service provider organizations from Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. Immigration Partnership of Waterloo Region continues to be a great support to our marketing efforts and a dedicated partner in the delivery of activities for both mentors and mentees.

If you are interested in the YMCA Mentorship Program, visit http://www.ymcacambridgekw.ca/en/employment-services/Mentorship.asp for more information.

Testimonial:

Good Morning Marilena,

Mentoring in Motion is an intelligent concept and your organization was fantastic. We are proud to be a part of your team. My great regards to the gracious mentors who participated in such an honourable contribution to the community. I learned a lot from experiencing the mock interviews at different stations and can’t wait to share the feedback I received instantaneously. I highly appreciate RBC for hosting the event that night. This gave me a lot of confidence in myself and I was amazed to meet awesome people at the event.

Thanking you,
Sally (Sailaja Bandi)
Community Focus:
From Refugee Camp to Business Success

Submitted by Nora Whittington, Community Engagement Coordinator

Dali and Miroslav Sarkonovic came to Waterloo Region 15 years ago with a dream for a “greater life” for themselves and their family. It really wasn’t all that long ago that they were in a refugee camp in Serbia and now, they are the proud owners of Williams Fresh Café at Kitchener City Hall. I had the opportunity to sit down at their café and chat with Dali about their journey to success.

I only understood it a bit. We had to learn the language and that was our first focus. We wanted to work hard and we didn’t want to waste a day...not one day! We knew we had to start at the bottom but we believed we wouldn’t be there forever. I cleaned houses and my husband delivered pizza. When we weren’t working, we were learning the language and raising our son. I joined a Focus for Ethnic Women program at one point which was helpful. When I went through that program I was asked the question, “What do you want to do?” I knew the answer was to have my own business but I didn’t know what type of business. I am a leader - it is just my personality type. My husband eventually ended up working at Linamar and I worked at Giant Tiger. I was one of the first employees to begin at Giant Tiger when it first opened in Waterloo Region. I used this opportunity to learn everything I could about business. I was able to get involved in management while working there and I gained lots of experience. During this time we were able to establish a credit rating: We worked hard and saved, we bought a house and we later bought a different house and were able to build our financial strength during this time. Once we had purchased a house, we felt like we really belonged here. I began to educate myself about franchises. I attended workshops in Toronto to learn more. I was skeptical but persevered. It took about 5-6 years of research and gaining knowledge, all while we worked and raised a family. Eventually, someone we knew in real estate told us about the opportunity for the Williams franchise at Kitchener City Hall. Again, we didn’t know what we wanted for sure but we knew we wanted a mainstream business. We wanted to be part of the Canadian community. We put an offer in and were in competition with two other
buyers. We had a meeting at the Williams head office in Toronto. We have the same value system, the same work ethic. While we waited to hear the news, I visited the café on a regular basis and would sit and observe the business and the staff. I took notes. I watched which staff members were offering superb customer service – every detail. We received the news that our offer was accepted. Can you believe that we arrived in Canada on March 29, 1999 at 4:00 p.m. and we signed the deal on March 29 at 4:00 p.m., exactly 11 years later? We had fear but we moved forward and worked hard and thankfully the business has been a success. We worked long hours but five years later we now enjoy working fewer hours and we go on vacation every four months.

What are the lessons you have learned along the way?

We aren’t smarter than others. We worked hard and had some luck along the way. One thing I have to say is that from the moment we arrived in Canada, we were open to learning and not believing we had all the answers. We wanted to accept the Canadian culture. We all need to embrace the differences rather than fight against them. We wanted to get to know Canadian born people and integrate. When I worked at Giant Tiger one of my coworkers invited me to her wedding. It was so simple and yet so powerful because it helped me feel apart of the community. Many immigrants, when they come to Canada, may be physically here but they are living there - where they came from. We need to fully step in to where we are now. That is what we committed to and it has helped us a lot.

I can tell you that this business has been three times more work than we thought it would be but we have absolutely no regrets. We were committed to changing a business that had been struggling. I remember as soon as we took over the business, I went to the Mayor of Kitchener’s Office to set a time to meet about the downtown - about the business. He came and met me at our café and we talked. I shared my ideas and my passion. Customer service became our priority and within two months the business had totally turned around. We wanted our business to build community - a family of customers. We wanted them to feel like it was a home away from home and that is what has happened.

As an immigrant business owner, do you feel it is important to hire immigrants?

We hire immigrants but we don’t have an intention or a goal to hire immigrants. We hire who we feel is right for the job and our business. I have hired a few great staff from Focus for Ethnic Women but I have also hired many Canadian-born individuals.

What are the keys to your success?

Hard work, acceptance, a positive attitude, compassion, fairness, customer service and going the extra mile for people. Many of our customers are like family. We get to know them. We share in their lives. Sometimes if a customer isn’t able to pay, we help them out. Once we had a young customer whose debit card didn’t work when she went to pay for her BLT sandwich. I said not to worry about it; it is on us. She was quite embarrassed. A week later a man came in and said he wanted to give me the money for his daughter’s sandwich. I told him that it was taken care of and we were happy to help her. He insisted and then I insisted. In the end he accepted our gift and asked for our business card. He is a local business man who is well known and connected. His office now orders their catering through us and he has spread the word. Being compassionate really makes a difference and it is part of our approach to doing business.

Any advice for new immigrants who want to live the greater life, too?

Remain positive, accept the cultural differences and don’t give up. Canada or the system doesn’t owe us anything. Get to know Canadians and learn from them.
Immigration Partnership People

Peter Donahue, 
Immigration Partnership Council Chair

My career working with newcomers to Canada spans over 25 years, beginning in Fredericton, New Brunswick. After graduating from the University of New Brunswick with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Development Studies, I started working with Fredericton’s YMCA Immigrant Settlement Services in the early 1990s as the first Career Counsellor hired to work with new immigrants. In 1995, I moved to the University of New Brunswick Saint John campus as its first International Student Advisor. During that time, the international population of this 2,000 strong commuter campus grew to 600 and we were recognized by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada for our efforts to internationalize the Saint John community.

In 2005, I moved with my family (including spouse Phyllis Power, Manager of Global Engagement Programming at Laurier, and daughters Bliss (15) and Beatrice (12)) to Waterloo Region as the Director of Laurier International at Wilfred Laurier University. Over the past 10 years with Laurier I have been privileged to be involved in the development of Laurier International. As the first full-time Director from 2005-2013, we grew the university’s international student population from 250 to 1,200, developed the services and supports available to these students which I now oversee, and grew the Laurier International staff team from 4 employees overseeing a student exchange program to over 20 employees supporting over 1,000 international students at Laurier, collaborations with over 300 international universities in 30 countries, and on-campus programs such as the global engagement initiative, an English for Academic Purposes program and support services for international students from recruitment to alumni status. In 2009, I was awarded an Honorary Professorship by the Yunnan Normal University of Kunming in China for my efforts to establish a Canadian Studies Centre focusing on ethnic and minority relations.

As Laurier’s current Associate Director of International Student Support I work in partnership with various academic departments, service units, individual faculty and students to develop a comprehensive approach to the education and support of international students that intentionally prepares them to be active and engaged participants during their time at Laurier and in the Waterloo Region. Through these collaborations I have had the opportunity to put into place projects that lead to innovations in curriculum; that foster intercultural exchanges and cooperative opportunity amongst faculty, staff and students from different cultures; help others develop skills, attitudes and knowledge that are needed to become inter-culturally effective; and create an ethos within the university that values the international perspectives and initiatives that international students bring to our community, on and off campus. I have represented Laurier with many international organizations, worked on projects in Costa Rica, China, Mexico, Iran, France, Germany and Ghana, and collaborated with colleagues from over 30 countries.

After nearly a decade of extensive travel representing Laurier with its international partners, I am excited about the unique opportunity I have as the new Chair of the Immigration Partnership Council to connect with the settlement and new Canadian communities of the Waterloo Region and further my connections to the Waterloo Region community. Having been involved in the development of Immigration Partnership’s Community Action Plan I am thrilled to work with the Council, Immigration Partnership staff and all of our community partners and other stakeholders in its implementation to improve immigration experiences in Waterloo Region.
Immigration Partnership Pillar Updates

SETTLE PILLAR - submitted by Daniella McIntosh, Community Engagement Coordinator

Over the last few months, the members of the Settle Steering Group (SSG) have continued to make progress with their activities in the Community Action Plan while also taking the lead on raising awareness of important immigration issues. The SSG brought their concerns about the potential impact of Bill C-585 on the income security of refugee claimants to the Immigration Partnership Council and a position paper was issued in late September. The Health Supports Action Group has been focused on engaging the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (WWLHIN) and addressing the need for a local health strategy for immigrants and refugees. The group developed a background paper for the WWLHIN with three recommendations for action and met with WWLHIN staff to present these recommendations and to discuss ways that the Immigration Partnership can support the WWLHIN in addressing immigrant and refugee health needs going forward. Moving into 2015, the focus for the Settle Pillar will be on next steps for addressing the health care needs of immigrants and refugees and developing work on housing and language education.

WORK PILLAR - submitted by Nora Whittington, Community Engagement Coordinator

The Work Steering Group (WSG) met at the end of November to continue their work to bridge the gap between employers and immigrant talent. The WSG is on target with the Community Action Plan, focusing on sourcing corporate sponsorship for the Immigrant Talent Engagement Program pilot project. This program is something you will hear more about in coming months. A networking event with over 20 employers was held at the Kitchener City Hall Rotunda, in partnership with the Conestoga College Immigrant Internship Program and the YMCA Mentorship Program. Here, immigrant job-seekers were able to connect with employers who are hiring or planning to hire in the near future and develop their networking skills. In early December, a Diversity Intelligence Seminar for employers was held focusing on “What Employers Need to Know to Hire Immigrant Talent.” A panel of employment service providers and employers discussed supports available to employers including hiring incentives, job fairs and other supports, and the positive impact of these services on business. Employers in attendance reported great value in understanding the information provided. Coming up, look for Immigration Partnership to partner in a Virtual Job Fair in February 2015 and offer the next networking event in the spring of 2015, providing area employers the chance to connect with immigrant job-seekers.

BELONG PILLAR - submitted by Janet Howitt, Community Engagement Coordinator

Community Action Plan

Strategic Direction 2: Strengthen awareness of and access to healthcare supports for immigrants and refugees

Strategic Direction 6: Strengthen employer understanding of the value of creating a more diverse workforce

Strategic Direction 8: Increase public awareness of the value of a diverse and welcoming community

Community Action Plan priorities for the Belong Steering Group (BSG) can be summarized in three words: Awareness, participation and change. Education about the reality and importance of diversity in our community will begin to build understanding and welcome, which will then lay the ground work for immigrants and refugees to participate and be more engaged in the community.
Increased community participation and voice will then lead to organizational and community change. The BSG is therefore planning a public awareness campaign to share key messages to highlight the importance and contribution of immigrants and refugees. A small action group is forming with support from other Pillar areas and resourced by communication and marketing expertise. The BSG is also building awareness of and participation in municipal government among community residents, whether or not they are Canadian citizens. A Municipal Services Action Group is planning to offer interactive sessions in 2015 throughout the region, bringing sessions to where community meets. Once information is shared opportunities for meaningful civic engagement can be identified and supported. The BSG is also planning to meet with various organizations over the next year to learn about equity, inclusion and diversity strategies. The group will explore what strategies exist, how they are implemented and communicated, and their outcomes, successes and challenges, to help make existing strategies more effective at overcoming the exclusion and lack of belonging experienced by immigrants and refugees.


### Canadian Immigration Summit 2015: Towards a National Immigration Action Plan

In April the Conference Board of Canada’s National Immigration Centre (NIC) is hosting a major two-day event to explore the future of Canada’s immigration system. This event will draw major stakeholders from across Canada’s immigration system to share the latest research findings, unique insights and perspectives, and contribute to the development of a National Immigration Action Plan for Canada. Join them on April 13-14, 2015 at the Fairmont Château Laurier in Ottawa for the Canadian Immigration Summit 2015: Towards a National Immigration Action Plan.

The Summit is an opportunity for participants to share their views and insights, and take part in interactive discussions and consultation sessions to identify challenges and innovative solutions. These insights will be captured and used in the development of a National Immigration Action Plan for Canada that embodies a shared vision for the future, specific goals and recommended actions for stakeholders to undertake in building an internationally competitive national immigration system for Canada. The Summit will focus on the seven following themes:

1. The Immigration Imperative;
2. Global Best Practices in Immigration, from Invitation to Integration;
3. Leveraging Immigration as a Source of Innovation;
4. Building an Immigration System Responsive to the Needs of Business;
5. Streamlining Immigration for Skilled Trades People;
6. Consultations on Enhancing Canada’s Immigration System; and
7. What’s “Hot” in Immigration.

The Summit will provide opportunities for exploration, learning and discussions as to how we can enhance our immigration system. The Summit is designed to provide time for networking, expert-delegate sharing and connecting the key players to build strategic partnerships. For more information or to register, visit: [http://www.conferenceboard.ca/conf/immigration/default.aspx](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/conf/immigration/default.aspx).
Community Events & Updates

Follow Immigration Partnership on Twitter (@ImmigrationWR) or visit the Immigration Portal at www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca to get information on local immigration related news and upcoming community events.

Save the Date

Immigration Partnership Community Forum
This year’s Forum will provide space for awareness-raising about Immigration Partnership and the progress made by community partners in overcoming barriers to settlement, work and belonging experienced by immigrants and increasing connectivity with key stakeholders in the wider Waterloo Region community.

When: March 26, 2015 at 5 p.m
Where: The Tannery, 151 Charles St. W., Kitchener

Greater KW Chamber of Commerce 2015 Business Excellence Awards Gala
The Business Excellence Awards were established to encourage and recognize Chamber members who have made exceptional contributions through their involvement and leadership in the community. This premier event is a time for the business community to come together and show appreciation to those businesses and organizations that have helped shape Waterloo Region as one of the strongest business communities in Canada.

When: February 19, 2015 at 6 p.m.
Where: Marshall Hall, 425 Bingemans Centre Dr., Kitchener
Info and registration: http://greaterkwchamber.com/networking-events/business-excellence-awards/

Virtual Job Fair
Northern Lights Canada, Lutherwood, Immigration Partnership and Conestoga College are hosting “Today’s Portal for Tomorrow’s Job”, Waterloo Region’s second annual Virtual Job Fair. Here, employers will have access to a large group of job-seekers, including those receiving services through local Employment Ontario Service Providers, Conestoga College graduates and over 15,000 candidates registered through Skills International.

When: February 10 and 11, 2015
Employer registration: Sohail Khan, Skills International at sohailk@wil.ca

Info and registration: http://greaterkwchamber.com/networking-events/business-excellence-awards/

OneROOF Fundraising Event
Call to Action: Eradicate Youth Homelessness with Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire (Ret).

When: March 5, 2015; Registration at 5 p.m., Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
Where: Waterloo Inn Conference Hotel, 475 King St. N., Kitchener
Info and registration: 519-742-2788 ext. 212
Kitchener Public Library Multicultural Programs

English Conversation Circle
in partnership with YMCA Immigrant Services.
Practice your English skills while we talk, listen, learn and laugh about life in Canada. This free drop-in program is a great way to improve your English speaking skills and meet new people. All ages welcome. No registration required.

When: Tuesdays at 7 p.m.
Where: KPL Central location, 85 Queen St. N. (Bus routes #8 and #15)

Meet a Police Officer Who Speaks Your Language
within the Library Settlement Partnership Program.
Learn more about police services with staff from Waterloo Regional Police Services. Meet police who speak languages other than English. Registration required.

When: February 3, 2015 at 6 p.m.
Where: Forest Heights Community Library, 251 Fischer-Hallman Road (Bus routes #2 and #22)
Registration: Call Kristin at 519-505-2643

Home Assistance Program
within the Library Settlement Partnership Program.
Learn about the different ways your home uses electricity and how you can save on your monthly electricity bill. This session will be facilitated by staff from GreenSaver, a not-for-profit energy efficiency organization. Registration required.

When: February 28, 2015 at 2 p.m.
Where: KPL Central location, 85 Queen St. N. (Bus routes #8 and #15)
Registration: Call Eltag at 519-745-2531 ext.123

Public Legal Education for Spanish Speakers: Session 3
with Rachael Lake, B.A., J.D., articling student from Waterloo Region Community Legal Services. Registration required.

Rachael Lake, abogada en prácticas con el bufete jurídico de la región de Waterloo, ofrecerá tres sesiones gratis en español para aprender sus derechos legales. La tercera sesión es sobre sus derechos cuando aplica y/o recibe los beneficios sociales de Ontario Works y/o ODSP (la pensión para los con una discapacidad).

When: February 11, 2015 at 1 p.m.
Where: KPL Central location, 85 Queen St. N. (Bus routes #8 and #15)
Registration: http://tinyurl.com/nmjb2eb or call 519-743-7502

Technology Help with Volunteers
by appointment at various library locations.
If you are new to the web you can meet with a volunteer who will show you the basics of using the computer and searching the Internet, as well as instructions on basic use of MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher. Call the library at 519-743-7502 to make an appointment.
**Conestoga College**

**Immigrant Internship Program**

Conestoga College’s Immigrant Internship Program wants to connect you with your career!

The Immigrant Internship Program supports Internationally Trained Individuals with limited Canadian work experience. The support and guidance provided within program equips candidates with effective tools and strategies to be successful in today’s labour market. The Immigrant Internship Program connects individuals with their employment career goals through internships with developed employer partnerships.

**Enhanced Language Training Program for Internationally Trained Engineers**

Conestoga College has available seats for the free Enhanced Language Training Program for Internationally Trained Engineers. This professional program is designed to provide candidates with occupation specific language training and job placement support. The program is recruiting for engineers in all disciplines – Mechanical, Electrical, Civil, IT. Call to inquire about our upcoming information session.

**Info:** Call Tina Allishaw – Manager, Immigrant Pathways at 519-748-5220 ext. 2587