If immigration into Waterloo Region was not on people’s radar prior to November 2015, that is no longer the case.

The arrival of hundreds of Syrian refugees into Waterloo Region in under two months has brought refugees and immigrants, the organizations that serve them, the private people that support them and their challenges and successes to the fore of public attention.

Amid the craze of activity to support this historic resettlement, we see daily reminders of the amazing work that happens in this community on a recurring basis, to help make people’s lives better. Some of that is part of the regular course of life, and some of it falls within the remarkable effort currently taking place across Waterloo Region to welcome and support the region’s newest residents in a truly “made in Waterloo Region” way.

This latest issue of our newsletter pays tribute to both the ordinary and the extraordinary: Each important in their own right, each impacting this community and its residents in unique and impressive ways.

This newsletter highlights the impressive refugee resettlement efforts locally as well as several services and employers that are trying to support life improvements for immigrants, refugees and others in Waterloo Region in their day to day work. You will find information on the people behind Immigration Partnership as well as the work currently being done by our partners.

We are so massively impressed with the way this community has come together to support one of the largest immigration undertakings in Canada’s history: A very special thanks goes to our partners and the many other people getting involved.

We hope you enjoy this issue of our Newsletter and are inspired to get involved in improving the lives of immigrants, refugees and other people in Waterloo Region in your own way.

Tara Bedard
Manager, Immigration Partnership
CURRENT SITUATION

Our community has a long history of resettling refugees, both through government assistance and private sponsorship. An acceleration in the arrival of refugees started in December 2015. The arrivals will exceed the previously anticipated 2016 commitment by 250%. In total, over 1,000 government assisted and privately sponsored refugees from the Syrian crisis are expected, in addition to previous 2016 refugee resettlement commitments.

The pace of arrivals has increased since January 1st and has continued at this rate through February. The number of arrivals changes daily, at the time of writing this article over 900 refugees from Syria have arrived in Waterloo Region. The majority of arrivals at this time are government assisted refugees; an increase in privately sponsored refugees is also expected in the coming months.

EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS

In order to adequately respond to the influx of Syrian refugees, resettlement organizations, community services and municipalities needed to initiate a new way of planning and working together. The Immigration Partnership has played an important role in bringing people together who have not worked as closely in the past as is necessary now. Immigration Partnership members, settlement service providers, local municipalities, community emergency management coordinators, and various other community service providers are working together. They are working to ensure there is a collaborative and coordinated approach to facilitating the arrival and settlement of the refugees in Waterloo Region. A community steering committee and a number of working groups have been created to help coordinate the community’s response. These partners are meeting regularly to share information, to identify challenges and necessary supports, and to respond accordingly. The working groups include:

- International Skills and Employment
- Education
- Children’s Services
- Health Care and Mental Health
- Housing
- Community Integration and Language Support
- Volunteers and Donations
- Transportation
- Safety and Security
- Communications
- Community Emergency Management Coordination

Ensuring community integration through recreation, prompt school enrolment and language training are all important, as are ensuring access to community services such as health care and transportation.

Dr. Liana Nolan, Region of Waterloo Commissioner of Public Health and Emergency Services, Medical Officer of Health, Co-Chair Waterloo Region’s Syrian Refugee Preparedness Steering Committee

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN WATERLOO REGION

REFUGEES

#WRwelcomesrefugees
KEY ISSUES

The key issues and challenges are not new to this community or to refugee resettlement. The increase in arrivals has required us to look at these challenges with a fresh perspective and a different approach. Many challenges are a focus of a specific working group listed above. Some key issues include securing affordable housing and employment. In addition, it has been important to look at how to increase the strength of the community, for example by supporting private sponsors and advocating for the return of the Host Program which matches newcomers with community connectors. Ensuring community integration through recreation, prompt school enrolment and language training are all important, as are ensuring access to community services such as health care and transportation.

BENEFITS TO ALL

The response to the current influx of arrivals will have a long term benefit for the whole community. There has been an outpouring of generosity from the residents of Waterloo Region, and many people are helping out in new ways. The refugees themselves will become valuable members of our community. There is also new energy to look at longstanding social issues with new approaches. We are working together in ways we have never worked together before, which will have lasting impact. The benefits will affect the current refugees but also future refugees and current residents of Waterloo Region, because we are learning to work together differently and tackle longstanding issues with new solutions.

Thank you to all of you who have and continue to work tirelessly to help make people’s lives better, and for the betterment of this community. It is a pleasure working with you all.

Visit www.WRwelcomesrefugees.ca for more information and updates.

IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP FUND FOR SYRIAN NEWCOMERS

Since November 2015, Waterloo Region has welcomed almost 900 Syrian refugees. Already, Waterloo Region residents have donated more than $100,000 to a special fund for Syrian newcomers.

The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation collected these funds and matched them for a total of more than $200,000. The Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation has also begun collecting donations.

Immigration Partnership will receive applications and provide grants to community agencies and private sponsors directly involved in the resettlement of Syrian refugees. Donations to the fund will be used to support projects and initiatives geared towards:

- Helping Syrian refugees access health and mental health services, affordable housing, language training and language supports.
- The development of community supports geared towards navigating systems and community integration.

Community agencies face many programming challenges due to resource and funding constraints. Additional giving to the Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers will enable us to continue flowing support to local agencies when and where it is needed.

Please give to The Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers, established by The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation.

To donate visit: www.kwcf.ca or www.cndfoundation.org

The Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation will be matching donations up to $400,000.

Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation
SERVICES THAT SUPPORT NEWCOMERS IN WATERLOO REGION

K-W MULTICULTURAL CENTRE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOPS

The K-W Multicultural Centre (KWMC)'s Job Search Workshop (JSW) program is a guided pre-employment program designed to assist newcomers in Waterloo Region on their job search pathway with information and tools specifically designed to meet their needs.

The program begins with a personalized assessment to determine current needs, goals and interests of each participant. Integral to the JSW program is the strength of community referrals. KWMC strives to maintain ongoing relationships with community partners and to inform clients of additional services in their community that can help them work towards their specific employment goals. Participating in JSW results in:

- Building confidence and self-efficacy.
- Strategically planning the next steps for each unique job search journey.
- Empowering participants to make informed choices.

Participants have the opportunity to participate in two workshops. Module 1 focuses on labour market research and is customized to help individuals learn more about their profession and transferable skills. Module 2 helps participants prepare for job interviews. Program participants have the ongoing support from staff throughout their employment journey and benefit from personalized one-to-one action plan building sessions. Eligible community members include Live-in Caregivers, Permanent Residents and Convention Refugees.

Oscar Fernandez Mendez, a Systems Engineer from The Dominican Republic, participated in the JSW program. He reports: “I was frustrated; everything was very different from what I knew, from my home country. But after every class I was full of hope and more confident. And the reason was that I understood the job search process. What I should or shouldn’t do in each step in order to get a job, what the employers are looking for the candidates. I learned how to stand out and differentiate from the others. I started to figure out that more than a job, learning about the culture and how the job search works in Canada is the key to success in the settlement process. The JSW is a great program, created to fill the right needs for the immigrant that wants to join the Canadian job market. Not only because it has a great content but the people around the program are committed with their heart to it.”

Oscar is now employed as a Network Security Specialist at Blackberry.
WATERLOO REGION COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Waterloo Region Community Legal Services (WRCLS) is a non-profit community legal clinic, governed by an independent board of directors representative of the community it serves.

Community Legal Services employs lawyers, legal workers, paralegals, social workers, administrative staff and volunteers to provide information, advice and representation in certain prescribed areas of law, such as:

- Tenant Disputes
- Ontario Disability Support Program
- Ontario Works
- Canada Pension Plan Disability
- Employment Insurance
- Criminal Injuries Compensation
- Consumer Law

People seeking assistance from Community Legal Services must meet financial eligibility guidelines based on income, asset level and family size. These guidelines are determined by Legal Aid Ontario. Eligible people receive services at no cost.

For newcomers to Canada, it can be particularly challenging to navigate legal systems and resolve issues. WRCLS has access to interpretation services in over 200 languages, and legal staff members are particularly skilled in reducing complex legal terms and processes into plain language and step-by-step directions to resolve legal problems.

Social workers are available to provide extra support to WRCLS clients to work through legal problems, provide warm referrals to other community service providers and help reduce whatever barriers a client may be facing. Everyone at WRCLS is sensitive to the potential effects of a person’s immigration experience and employs trauma-informed practices in addressing the needs of clients.

WRCLS representatives are often in the community, providing public legal education to groups and agencies. Recently, the Housing Coalition of Waterloo Region awarded WRCLS the 2015 Outstanding Housing Educator award. The award is an annual tribute to an individual or group that has “demonstrated exceptional commitment, passion and innovation in increasing awareness and educating the community about affordable housing issues within Waterloo Region.” The clinic was nominated by the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries for its work in providing ongoing public legal education to tenant groups as well as front-line service providers.

The best way to access legal services from WRCLS is to phone the office at 519-743-0254 to discuss the problem. Callers will be required to provide their name, address and information about their income to determine eligibility. Because of the high volume of calls received on a daily basis, callers may have to leave a recorded voice mail message, and WRCLS makes every effort to respond to messages within one business day.
LEARNING FROM LOCAL EMPLOYERS: SUPPORTING NEWCOMER EMPLOYEES REAPS REWARDS

Balancing the needs of the business with the needs of the employee is a central focus of the work culture at Moores Clothing for Men in Cambridge. General Manager Tim Rieck notes that their corporate culture reflects care, compassion and understanding. He says, “just because someone does not speak English competently - it doesn’t mean this person isn’t highly intelligent. People minimize others’ abilities if they don’t speak English fluently.” Moores recently began providing on-site English classes for employees after work hours.

The company sees the benefit in supporting employees in improving their English skills while the advance in their careers within the company.

Located at 550 Boxwood Drive in Cambridge, Moores believes in helping employees develop as workers as well as individuals. It employs 110 workers in its tuxedo rental business during the April-November prom season. Employees clean, press and process the rental tuxedos orders for men across Canada.

Moores boasts a 67% employee retention rate among their seasonal employees. They say: “We have employees coming back year after year to work during our busy season. We have families working here.”

The Moores warehouse in Cambridge is decorated with 26 flags representing the countries of origin of their workers. One unique feature of this employee centred business is its sponsorship committee which is made up of leadership staff and employees who do not speak English as their first language. Current employees can connect friends and family members with the HR department. The sponsorship committee supports the candidate during the interview, on boarding and job orientation process.

Moores notes that the process of arranging on site English classes is easy and a government program reimburses them for two thirds of the cost of the classes as the employer.

Moores believes that being an employee focused company is good for business: “We have improved staffing costs because our employees stay with us, we build loyalty and people take pride in their work.”
IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP PEOPLE:

ELISEO MARTELL, SETTLE STEERING GROUP VICE CHAIR

Originally from El Salvador, Eliseo Martell was forced to leave his home in 1990 due to the ongoing civil war and his involvement in community health programs in areas under the control of insurgent forces. At that time, he moved to Canada as a refugee.

From 1976-1990 in El Salvador, Eliseo worked as the Director of a Primary Health Care Centre and a Community Health Program and as a Professor of Community Medicine with the School of Medicine at the National University of El Salvador. He graduated as a Medical Doctor and trained in pediatrics at the San Juan de Dios Hospital in Santa Ana, El Salvador. He holds a Masters Degree in Public Health from the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, Netherlands and a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the Central American Institute of Public Administration in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Upon arrival in Canada, Eliseo settled in Kitchener where he worked as the Director of the Lutheran Refugee Program. He then returned to his work in the health sector and held positions as a Health Promotion Officer, Manager of a Youth Health Program and Manager of Special Projects, all with Region of Waterloo Public Health.

Eliseo knows firsthand the challenges to arriving in a new country as a refugee and successfully adapting and feeling that you belong. He therefore decided to get involved in initiatives addressing the needs of new immigrants and refugees. He has been involved in multiple community initiatives and has sat on the Board of Directors for many organizations including, the Access Alliance Multicultural Health Centre in Toronto, Canadian Public Health Association, Social Development Centre Waterloo Region (formerly, Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo), KW Counselling Services and the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support. Eliseo was also Chair of the Multicultural Health Coalition where he was very involved in the establishment of the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre and President of the Board of Directors of the Ontario Public Health Association.

Since 2013, Eliseo has been a member of Immigration Partnership’s Settle Steering Group and in 2015 he became it’s Vice Chair. Through his involvement with Immigration Partnership he works with agencies addressing the multiple needs of immigrants and refugees. He believes that this initiative creates the conditions for a coordinated and successful effort to reduce barriers and build new initiatives to address the inequalities and difficulties that new immigrants face upon arrival in Canada. Eliseo sees the need for Immigration Partnership to continue and solidify the great work already done in Waterloo Region.
IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

SETTLE

Many members of the Settle Steering Group (SSG) are actively involved in the Syrian Refugee Resettlement efforts in Waterloo Region. The group continues to focus on welcoming and ensuring successful integration of our newest community members, and it is looking ahead at how to maintain momentum of engagement through the Syrian Refugee Resettlement structure and how that work connects to the SSG’s ongoing work. The group is very excited to continue to move forward and has recently established a Refugee Services Action Group which is made up of members of refugee serving organizations and is looking at the co-ordination of effective and efficient services to meet urgent and ongoing needs of refugees arriving in Waterloo Region. The SSG has also finalized a report of the Immigrant and Refugee Housing Consultation held in 2015 and a plan for follow-up to the recommendations has been outlined. This report is available on the Immigration Portal. For more information, contact Daniella McIntosh at dmcintosh@regionofwaterloo.ca

WORK

Much has been happening in the Work Steering Group (WSG). A few new partners have recently joined the WSG: Gayle Horyn, Nibus HR Solutions; Sherri McDermid, Lutherwood; and Julie Newman, Carizon. With lots of energy at Work Pillar meetings, there has been a commitment to delivering networking training sessions for immigrant job-seekers prior to job fair events hosted by community partners such as Communitech, Workforce Planning Board and the Chamber of Commerce Business Expo. It has long been identified that soft skill training is important for immigrants as they seek employment and it is also a fact that immigrants need connections to land that ideal opportunity and networking is critical for that to happen. These events have been very popular and WSG is thankful to have had Cindy Tarasow (Pomegranate), Sandi Young and Sharon Gilroy-Dreher (Stork Family Holdings) participate as HR experts in delivering the Do’s and Don’ts when Networking for Employment. WSG continued forward with development of its Immigrant Talent Engagement Program (ITEP), which was piloted in 2015 with Scotiabank with extremely positive results. Next steps are in planning and partners look forward to seeing the direction of this program. Our ‘work’ team participates in the Business After 5 events in Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge as an important place for connecting with employers and bringing awareness to the benefits of accessing immigrant talent in Waterloo Region. Community members can see and meet our team at these bi-monthly events. WSG is also planning an HR Sector Panel event for employment service provider staff in late winter/spring which will focus on the trends of recruitment, hiring and retention of employers in Waterloo Region. Immigration Partnership is also partnering with the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce on a Point of View event on April 15th featuring John Stackhouse as the keynote speaker — stay tuned for details! And don’t forget about the upcoming Global Skills Conference on April 13th at Bingemans where we’ll be hosting the annual Networking Event again. WSG also participates in the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Employment Working Group to develop a plan for support this group as they look for employment or start businesses in the region. For more information, contact Nora Whittington at nwhittington@regionofwaterloo.ca

Read Immigration Partnership’s submission to the Ontario Budget Consultation by visiting www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca
BELONG

Members of the Belong Steering Group (BSG) define belonging as “an essential human need to be accepted and valued by others in order to reach one’s full potential in connecting, participating, integrating and thriving in the community.” To create and enhance a place and culture of welcome and acceptance BSG’s Public Education Action Group continues to refine plans for an awareness campaign which will recognize and celebrate the contributions and importance of a diverse community. Bringing forward the message that we are all neighbours in Waterloo Region, this campaign will be launched in 2016. To create awareness and opportunities for civic engagement, understanding of local democracy, participation and contribution, the Municipal Services Action Group continues to offer interactive presentations to adult English as Second Language learners and is working to plan regular Canadian citizenship ceremonies across the Waterloo Region. To understand and enhance equity and inclusion policy, practice and challenges within local organizations we have planned presentations with groups including the Waterloo Region District School Board, the Waterloo Catholic District School Board and the Region of Waterloo. BSG has also been part of a community group developing Belonging Indicators – ways to name, encourage, practice and foster belonging in our community. Lastly, our newest action group will start to plan and coordinate events for Waterloo Region World Refugee Day 2016. More information will follow. For more information, contact Janet Howitt at jhowitt@regionofwaterloo.ca

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND UPDATES

Workshops for Healthcare Professionals

HealthForce Ontario is offering a series of workshops for Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals, which will also offer the opportunity to network with other Healthcare professionals in Waterloo Region. Topics will include: Orientation to Alternative Careers, Career Skills, Job Search, Resumes and Cover Letters, Understanding the Canadian Health Care System, Speakers on Internship and Mentorship.

The sessions will be at the Conestoga College Career Centre, 285 Weber St. N. in Waterloo from 9:30-11:30 am on March 17 and March 31.

To register, contact Marlene Meechan at m.meechan@healthforceontario.ca

Iranian New Year

Saturday, March 19, 2:00-4:00 pm
MAIN Library (Auditorium), 500 Parkside Dr.
Join us for this very popular annual event to welcome in the Iranian New Year. Light refreshments will be served. Drop in

Summer Camp Info Session

Saturday, April 16, 2:00-3:30 pm
MAIN Library (Auditorium), 500 Parkside Dr.
Interested in keeping your children busy this summer and learning new things? Find out about the many summer camps in the Region of Waterloo and available financial support. Drop in
**English Conversation Circles**

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. No registration required.

In partnership with YMCA Immigrant Services  
When: Mondays, 1:00-2:30 pm (no session on March 28)  
Where: Central Library, 85 Queen Street North / Bus route: #8

In partnership with the Doon Pioneer Park Community Centre  
When: Wednesdays, 12:00-1:30 pm (beginning March 23)  
Where: Pioneer Park Community Library, 150 Pioneer Drive / Bus route: #10, #16

**Transparent Language Online for ESL Learners**

Transparent Language Online is an online language learning program with beginner and intermediate ESL lessons. Learn how you can get started with these FREE ESL lessons. Registration required — register at the library or at [www.kpl.org](http://www.kpl.org).

When: Monday, March 21 at 7:00 pm  
Thursday, April 21 at 1:00 pm

Where: Central Library, 85 Queen Street North / Bus route: #8

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**First Time Home Buyer Information Session — Library Settlement Partnership Program**

Are you thinking about buying your first home? Learn about programs available in Waterloo Region to support new homebuyers, available tax refunds, and general home buying tips. Registration required. Call Eltag at 519-505-2538 or email eltag@kwmc-on.com.

When: Monday, May 30 at 7:00 pm

Where: Forest Heights Community Library, 251 Fischer-Hallman Road / Bus routes: #1, #201

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**Summer Camp Information Session — Library Settlement Partnership Program**

Are you interested in finding opportunities for your children to learn new things and stay engaged this summer? Join us to learn about summers camps available in Waterloo Region. We’ll also talk about camp registration and the types of financial support and subsidies available. Registration required. Call or email Wasan, 519-745-2531 ext. 132 or wasan@kwmc-on.com.

When: Saturday, April 30 at 10:30-11:30 am

Where: Forest Heights Community Library, 251 Fischer-Hallman Road / Bus routes: #1, #201

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**Money Matters for Newcomers and New Canadians**

In partnership with the Literacy Group, ABC Life Literacy Canada and TD Canada Trust, Money Matters is a free financial literacy program for adult learners. In this two-night course you’ll learn about how to bank and save in Canada, and how to build credit in Canada.

Registration required. Please register at the library or at [www.kpl.org](http://www.kpl.org).

When: Tuesday, April 5 & April 12 at 6:30-8:30 pm

Where: Central Library, 85 Queen Street North / Bus route: #8
Settlement Worker for those New to Canada

Our settlement worker helps newcomers learn about Canadian culture, schools, health care and more. No appointment needed. Call or email for more information: 519-621-1621 ext. 271 or ssachdev@ckwymca.ca.

When: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 am-5:30 pm
Where: Idea Exchange, Queen’s Square, 1 North Square, Cambridge

English Conversation Circles

Adults, practice your English with others who are new to Canada.

Tuesdays, 6:15-8:15 pm
Idea Exchange, Clemens Mill, 50 Saginaw Parkway, Cambridge

Wednesdays, 6:15-8:15 pm
Idea Exchange, Queen’s Square, 1 North Square, Cambridge

Thursdays, 6:15-8:15 pm
Idea Exchange, Preston, 435 King Street East, Cambridge

Fridays, 1:00-3:00 pm
Idea Exchange, Hespeler, 5 Tannery Street, Cambridge

SAVE THE DATE

World Refugee Day Celebrations will take place throughout the month of June. The local theme of this year’s events is ‘Waterloo Region Celebrates Refugees’.

If you are interested in hosting an event for World Refugee Day 2016, contact Janet Howitt at jhowitt@regionofwaterloo.ca

SAVE THE DATE

The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce together with Immigration Partnership is hosting a Point of View luncheon on April 15th. This event will feature John Stackhouse, former Editor-in-Chief of the Globe and Mail and current Senior Vice-President, office of the CEO with the Royal Bank of Canada.

Stay tuned for more information.
www.greaterkwchamber.com
WATERLOO REGION IMMIGRATION PROFILE
NOW AVAILABLE AT
www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca