

Immigration Partnership Council Meeting Minutes

Date:	17 February 2022
Time:	12:30pm – 2:00pm
Location:	Zoom
Present:	Tracey Hare Connell (Chair), Ernest Osei (Vice Chair), Pari Karem (Past Chair), Laura Stoutenburg (SSG Chair), Ian McLean (WSG Chair), Brittney Emslie (BSG Chair), James Bond, Margaret Walton-Roberts, Brian Kamm, Lucia Harrison, Shannon Down, Murray Gamble, Dauda Raji
Regrets:	Bryan Larkin, Della Lataille-Herdsman, Conal Vaughan, Sonja Erstic
Guests:	Harriet Taylor, Sonia Dennis
Staff:	Tara Bedard, Pauline Peng, Nora Whittington, Dan Vandebelt, Abiha Syed, Alejandra Amez, Gabriela Koenigsberg (placement student)

1. Welcome, Instructions, Regrets, Introductions

Quorum was achieved and the meeting started at 12:35pm. Tracey Hare Connell chaired the meeting as IP Council Chair for the first time. Tracey welcomed everyone to the Immigration Partnership Council's tenth zoom meeting and the first meeting of 2022. Tracey introduced Dr Ernest Osei as the new IP Council Vice Chair, who offered a Territorial Acknowledgment. Tracey indicated her intent to rotate responsibility for the Territorial Acknowledgment and asked for volunteers.

2. Review of the Meeting Agenda and Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council reviewed the agenda. Agenda approved. No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. New Chair/Vice Chair Introductions and Reflection

Tracey invited returning and new members of Council, as well as IP staff to do roundtable introductions.

Tracey is the Chief Inspiration Officer at The Coaching Co. She started with IP as a member of the Work Steering Group (WSG) when she was with Deloitte's Human Capital team. She then moved to the IP Council, encouraged by Ian McLean, who thought the Council needed someone else with a business perspective. She has been Vice Chair for the last two years and now Chair. She has learned a lot about immigrant and community needs along the way, and she is eager to support these initiatives, and is committed to ensuring the settlement and employment needs are met, as they are stronger now than they ever were.

Dr Ernest Osei is the Director of the Medical Physics Department at Grand River Hospital, and a professor at the University of Waterloo. In 2015, Grand River Hospital nominated him for IP's #IamWaterlooRegion campaign, which profiled immigrants from around the world living in Waterloo Region and their contributions to the community. In 2016, he joined IP Council. He has a dream of creating a community in which we do not judge people by the colour of their skin, but where people would see everyone as a resident of Waterloo Region. He feels this Council has been doing a lot for us to get to that dream.

Shannon Down is the Executive Director at Waterloo Region Community Legal Services, where she works with many newcomers, providing advice and assistance in a number of areas, including immigration law, housing law, social assistance law, consumer debt law, etc. A number of staff members on her team have participated on IP Steering Groups, because there is a mutual interest in the settlement and immigration space, but this is the first time someone is a member on the Council. She hopes to contribute to the Council as a lawyer, and as someone with a personal interest in social justice and equity. She feels that the work IP does in the community is tremendously important.

Murray Gamble is the President of the C3 Group, an engineering, construction and applied technology organization that works all over North America. The group has learned over the years that excellence resides in all skin colours, all genders, etc. – excellence has no boundaries. He is active in the community, and he sees the importance of immigration and how immigration policies affect other areas. While working in economic development, he sees companies trying to bring people into Canada. He is also a member of the University of Waterloo board, where he sees challenges and less-than-ideal paths for people coming here. He is interested in equity and believes everyone deserves the same opportunities, and would like to see more people succeed.

Dauda Raji is the Community Development Manager at House of Friendship. He has lived experiences as an immigrant and has the understanding of and appreciation for multiculturalism, diversity, equity and inclusion. He feels fortunate that he could work with different communities. Both of these made him appreciate how diverse the country is. We still need to pay more attention to new Canadians coming into the community. He hopes to bring some perspective of lived experience to Council.

Tara Bedard is the Executive Director. She is Canadian-born, but has her own lived experience as an immigrant in Hungary for 12 years, where she worked for a public interest law organization focused on equity, human rights, and discrimination issues. She spent a lot of time engaging with international and inter-governmental institutions and national governments on how policies were impacting marginalized groups across Europe, and did a lot of work on migration issues and freedom of movement. She came back to Canada in 2014, and soon after found the IP. She loves the work this initiative does in the Region.

Pauline Peng is the Program Assistant and provides administrative support. She is a “1.5th generation” immigrant, having moved to Canada with her parents as a teenager. She has seen the struggles of new immigrants like her parents and their friends, and feels privileged to work in this group that seeks to make life better for future immigrants.

Dan Vandebelt is the Community Engagement Coordinator for IPs Settle Steering Group. He is a child of immigrants, so he has seen the immigrant life second hand. He has been a part of IP from the early days, when it first started, in a variety of roles. He has been a community partner, involved in the planning in the transition stage, and then a staff member at IP for 6 years now. He also does research and data work for IP.

Abiha Syed is the Community Engagement Coordinator for IPs Belong Steering Group. She joined IP just as the pandemic started. IP's work is aligned with her values, beliefs, and passions. She was born in India, and has had her share of travel. Eventually she settled in Cambridge where she balances many different generations of immigrants at home. She previously worked Conestoga College and sits on several boards in Cambridge. She loves working in anything that helps immigrants feel a sense of belonging and that is a long journey, and immigration is a journey that looks different for everyone.

Alejandra Amez is originally from Columbia and came to Canada in 2015 with her husband. She has worked with IP since 2019 as a Communications Coordinator. She wants to continue to work to improve IP communication channels and to work with everyone on Council to create the vision we want for all residents of Waterloo Region, regardless of their background.

James Bond's family settled here for over 200 years, in Trussler and Galt. His wife's parents were from Germany. He sees the skills new immigrants bring to the country. He works with the Waterloo Region District School Board, where he has been supporting multilingual learners through K-12. This year he is also supporting the international languages program. He feels that the new, rich experiences immigrants bring are so important, and if support them they bring much to the region.

Margaret Walton-Roberts is a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University. She is an immigrant from England who came to Canada in 1994 as an international student. She first went to British Columbia, then moved to Ontario, and has lived here for 20 years. Margaret is involved in extensive research on immigration issues, and is excited to see what we will achieve in the coming year.

Laura Stoutenburg is the Chair of the Settle Steering Group and the Associate Chair of the LINC Program at Conestoga College. She has had various roles at Conestoga College connected to language and culture. Her family are Northern European immigrants who settled in the Prairies. She grew up not knowing the prejudice against Indigenous Peoples. Her own journey and education helped her realize things that she had never thought about before, and change her viewpoints which she had not even known needed to be changed. She has been involved in IP since WRIEN and really appreciates the work IP does to improve communications and connections across services.

Gabriela Koenigsberg is placement student from Conestoga College. She immigrated to Canada three years ago and feels the work IP does has changed her journey. She feels that when immigrants feel welcome in the nation, they do the best they can.

Nora Whittington is the Community Engagement Coordinator for the Work Steering Group. She was born in Toronto, grew up in Kawartha Lakes, and came to Waterloo Region many years ago for school and has not left since. She studied journalism and communications and her career started in media. Eventually she moved to non-profit and was involved in community organizations. She worked on the team with Ian McLean at the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, and still likes being associated with the Chamber in the work of WSG these days. She was the director of Big Brothers Big Sisters, where she fell in love with work with immigration. After adopting her daughter from China, she joined WRIEN and has been involved with IP for over 15 years now.

Brian Kamm is the Manager of Community Investment at United Way Waterloo Region. He has been with United Way for almost 12 years. Prior to that, he was involved in more frontline work, working with vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness and in child welfare. He is Canadian-born and his family has been settled here for many generations. United Way has been a long-time funder for IP. He is grateful for the reports from IP and feels he learns a lot from the group.

Pari Karem landed in Toronto on September 5, 1999. She thought she would start teaching statistics at UW, but she joined interpretation services, where she helped immigrants and refugees, as a transitional way to keep busy. She enjoyed working in the not-for-profit sector and never went back to graduate studies. She feels that making changes to the system is invaluable, and that that knowing your efforts make someone else's life better makes everything worth it.

Past Chair Leadership Recognition and Reflection

Tracey thanked Pari for her service as IP Council Chair these past two years. Pari has been involved with the Immigration Partnership since its inception. She joined IP leadership in January 2014 when she became Chair of the Settle Steering Group and a member of IP Council. She remained on Council when her term as SSG chair ended. In late 2017, she became IP Council Vice Chair and then transitioned to Council Chair at the end of 2019.

Pari has actively engaged in the work of the Council and given generously of her time. She is a strong advocate for the work of IP with elected officials and in the community. She centres the experiences of immigrants in all of our work and is a strong support for the staff team. She leads with caring and compassion. Pari also brought what she learned in part through engagement in IP back into YMCA and the works she leads there.

Pari expressed her gratitude to everyone on Council and the IP staff team, and her congratulations to all the new members on Council. She is looking forward to working with everyone.

4. Items for Approval

4.1 New Member Appointment

Ernest introduced the motion.

Motion: That the Immigration Partnership Council appoint Shannon Down, Murray Gamble and Dauda Raji as new members of the Council.

- Ernest brought forward the motion.
- Margaret seconded the motion.
- No members opposed or abstained from vote. All approved. Motion carried.

4.2 Consent Agenda

Ernest invited Council to review the Consent Agenda, which includes the 18 Nov 2021 Council Meeting Minutes, the Nov 2021-Feb 2022 CAP Progress Report and the Executive Director's Report.

Motion: That the Immigration Partnership Council approve the consent agenda in its entirety.

- Ernest brought forward the motion.
- Laura seconded the motion.
- No members opposed or abstained from vote. All approved. Motion carried.

5. Items for Information/Discussion

5.1 Refugee Task Force

Tara gave an update in place of Lucia Harrison. Around 255 Afghan refugees in the region now. Most families have been housed. In the work on school registration for people arriving under different statuses, and have reached a good process with the school boards, for children to get into school quickly as they arrive.

With the new immigration levels plan, we expected high levels of immigration compared to previous years and anticipate around 1000 refugees coming into the Region in the next year, which is higher than normal. The Committee discuss challenges related to affordable housing and health. There is no immediate solution to these challenges, and they need to be seen in the context of the broader community challenges. The meetings have become monthly as the pace has slowed down, but the group will meet again in two weeks, with conversations with Public Health and Economic

Development. There is short-term and long-term challenge with housing and healthcare, but we also need to plan long-term, in preparation for future initiatives like this. Government officials were involved in the Syrian initiative, and the Committee discussed that now is the time to put these bigger issues on the radar of the Regional Chair and Mayors. IP Council was supportive of engaging the elected officials at this time.

James noted that there are new pressures every time we get new families in. We get funding, but we also need to get settlement workers to support us. Pari agrees.

5.2 Child Welfare Redesign

Discussion with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services about Ontario's Child Welfare Redesign Strategy, to develop recommendations that will inform initiatives to improve child, youth and family well-being and eliminating outcome disparities for equity-deserving groups and Indigenous rights holders.

Tracey introduced and welcomed the guests who are presenting – Harriet Taylor and Sonia Dennis.

Presentation is available here: <https://youtu.be/oP7jn8A7wo4>



CWR Roadmap
Deck for Community

Sonia: the group has been working with black and racialized groups in Waterloo Region. We need a different model of service, so developed an Afro-centric model. Thinking about how we can work with community partners.

Harriet: three important questions to keep in mind with respect to the services:

1. What services are we providing?
2. What barriers are there for accessing the services?
3. How can services deliberately help them achieve wellbeing?

Ernest: in Ghana, when parents are busy or there are issues, children are often put with a family member. But here the culture is very different. We have to look into the deeper cultural norms of the groups we are serving.

Tara: are the reasons families come to child welfare system mostly related to poverty. From a prevention focus, that gives much direction.

Harriet: the ministry is interested in a multi-factorial approach

Pari: maybe less to do with systems but more with access to existing systems

Harriet: would like to connect with grassroots organizations – invited everyone to share connections.

6. Meeting Adjourned at 2:04pm

Tracey thanked everyone for participating in the meeting, wished everyone happy long weekend, and adjourned the meeting. Margaret, Laura, and Shannon volunteered to provide the Territorial Acknowledgement in future meetings.

Next Meeting: 21 Apr 2022, 12:30-2:00pm

Location: Zoom