

## Immigration Partnership Council Meeting Minutes

<b>Date:</b>	21 April 2022
<b>Time:</b>	12:30pm – 2:00pm
<b>Location:</b>	Zoom
<b>Present:</b>	Tracey Hare Connell (Chair), Ernest Osei (Vice Chair), Laura Stoutenburg (SSG Chair), Brittney Emslie (BSG Chair), James Bond, Margaret Walton-Roberts, Brian Kamm, Lucia Harrison, Shannon Down, Murray Gamble, Dauda Raji, Stephanie Schreuders, Conal Vaughan
<b>Regrets:</b>	Pari Karem (Past Chair), Ian McLean (WSG Chair), Della Lataille-Herdsman, Bryan Larkin, Sonja Erstic
<b>Guests:</b>	Sohrab Rahmaty, Charlene Hofbauer (Workforce Planning Board)
<b>Staff:</b>	Tara Bedard, Pauline Peng, Nora Whittington, Dan Vandebelt, Abiha Syed, Alejandra Amez

### 1. Welcome, Instructions, Regrets, Introductions

Quorum was achieved and the meeting started at 12:34pm. Tracey Hare Connell welcomed everyone to the Immigration Partnership Council's eleventh zoom meeting and the second meeting of 2022. Tracey announced changes in Council membership: Sonja Erstic from the Province of Ontario is stepping away from IP Council for now, but is still committed to supporting in any way she can. Police Chief Bryan Larkin announced his retirement from WRPS, which implicates a seat on IP Council. Peter Sweeney has been announced as the Region of Waterloo's new Community Services Commissioner – his predecessor was an IP Council member for the Region.

Margaret Walton-Roberts offered a moving, personal Territorial Acknowledgment.

### 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. Items for Approval

#### Consent Agenda

Ernest Osei invited Council to review the Consent Agenda, which includes the 17 Feb 2022 Council Meeting Minutes, the Feb-Apr 2022 CAP Progress Report, Refugee Task Force Meeting Minutes 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 Stoutenburg seconded the motion.
- No members opposed or abstained from vote. All approved. Motion carried.

### 4. Executive Director's Report

Tara Bedard shared immigration data and noted that the immigration pattern have changed a lot in the past few years (reference progress report last page). There was big growth last year coming out of the first year of the pandemic where immigration levels went down, which is consistent with the

plan of ten years of sustained growth of immigration levels in Canada. Last year, we had a record year of permanent resident landings in Waterloo Region, consistent with the government's efforts to bring in a record number of permanent residents into Canada overall. We saw just under 9,000 newcomers in Waterloo Region. The government also released their new levels plan in February for the next three years. The first two years include the 40,000 Afghan refugees to be resettled to Canada and the numbers continue to grow in the third year. This does not include temporary residents such as international students and temporary foreign workers. The Ukraine commitment is also not included in levels plan numbers, and we will see many people from there as well.

There is renewed interest donations to IP's Fund hosted at the KW Community Foundation as a result of Ukraine response. New fundraisers in Wilmot (\$2100 raised) and a [Faithlife Financial matched funding campaign](#). Overall, there are renewed interest in helping refugees and the funds.

She also noted recent discussions with the public school board, Google and settlement partners regarding access to Chromebooks for low income families, in particular government-assisted refugees. James Bond added the potential for Google to approach the federal government to integrate access to technology as an essential component of refugee supports.

## **5. Community Action Plan Implementation Highlights**

### **SSG**

Laura Stoutenburg gave an update on the works of SSG. In the last meeting, members shared information about Afghan and Ukrainian settlement needs and activities among immigrant-serving partners, and the discussion will continue in the next meeting. Immigrant Housing Working Group partners met regularly to share and network and maintained connection to housing and other community action tables to bring forward immigrant perspectives.

Reception House and IP staff supported WLU students to develop tools and supports for landlords renting to refugees. They shared Immigrant Survey data regarding housing to inform the project directions.

SSG launched a new working group– the Waterloo Region Migrant Workers Coalition – based on an identified need to share information and collectively respond to gaps for service and support for migrant and temporary workers. The group is exploring opportunities for referrals to services for migrant workers, supporting migrant worker employers, accessing needed data, and discussions about services for residents with precarious status.

Partners and staff also continue to support KW4 Ontario Health Team groups, which have identified refugees as a priority population.

She shared that Charlene Mak from WLU International Office is SSGs new Advisory Chair.

Tara wrote in chat: Thank you for the update, Laura. Lots of important work happening. And a strong connection between the new working group and international students who Charlene is connected to also.

### **BSG**

Brittney Emslie gave an update on the works of SSG. March 21 was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and IP and partners hosted four events as part of work to build community capacity to address racism. The Understanding White Supremacy as the Root of Racial Discrimination session had 65 attendees. BSG is committed to tackle white supremacy and is not

afraid to call it what it is. Coalition of Muslim Women KW also shared local anti-racism initiatives. Other sessions included [Spotlight on Anti-Racism Work](#) and [Amplifying YOUth Voices](#).

In addition, the group continued discussions that affect the lives of immigrants and refugees with community partners, ethno-cultural groups, and members. The Social Inclusion WG is planning an annual Multicultural Connection Event for June 2022. This discussion will be in partnership with the Work Steering Group and include focus on employment and volunteering for ethno-cultural groups.

The Welcoming Refugees Collaborative, newly formed as a sub-group of the IP Council Refugee Task Force, met a few times to address issues of Afghan, Ukrainian and other refugee welcoming and integration. This group will continue discussions within BSG meetings going forward.

## **WSG**

Nora Whittington gave an update in place of Ian McLean on the works of WSG. The Talent Hub Task Group has been gathering for more than four years and continues to look at the most feasible and effective way to launch an immigrant talent hub. It invited the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce to the next WSG meeting to talk about the newcomer employment hub they just launched. The critical component to address in hub planning is funding for programming, marketing, staff and administration. Ideally the hub would be hosted through the Chamber or a neutral group like an economic development group.

WSG continues to work with both Chambers on various workshops that target their members and other employers that are connected the work at IP. The Greater KW Chamber is running a series of Business Success webinars, which runs every Wednesday. Once a month IP helps plan a session that promotes the work we are doing.

Abiha Syed joined the meeting at 1pm.

The partnership with Worldwide Education Services (WES) continues, including developing and launching an employer playbook for Waterloo Region re: hiring immigrants and more. Expected completion is early June. WES has its headquarter in New York and has offices all around the world. They are committed to immigrant and refugee support, so we are excited to launch this project with them.

## **6. Items for Information/Discussion**

### **6.1 Immigration and Employment Research**

There was new research on immigration and employment across the Waterloo Wellington area, for information and discussion on what it means for the ongoing work of the Immigration Partnership and the IP Council. Tracey welcomed the guests from Workforce Planning Board: Sohrab Rahmaty, Employer Relations and Research Coordinator, and Charlene Hofbauer, Executive Director, to present the findings – attached.



Window of  
Opportunity - Imm F

Tara, Laura, and Brittney thanked Sohrab for the presentation.

Charlene added that manufacturing and construction are seeing some decline trends because of automation. Some NOC C/D skill level workers are shifting into A/B classes. She shared that we are

one of the first communities in Ontario to see this shift from C/D to A/B, while neighbouring communities are still in C/D, so we are ahead of everybody. We are hoping to share with the two Immigration Partnerships regarding what to do moving forward, i.e. advocacy. WSGs Talent Hub group is also addressing the trends. We are going down the right path overall.

Tara wrote in chat: I appreciate the recommendations and see many linkages to much of the work connected to various partners of the Immigration Partnership and how some of that might grow and change in the future, and also see this supporting the case for the need for the Talent Hub has been discussed.

Ernest noted that in terms of the shift from C/D to A/B skill levels, we may be gradually creating the impression that getting a manufacturing/construction job in the area is limited.

Sohrab added that we need to advocate to the policymakers to bring in the type of immigrants that suit the current labour market shaped by the shift as well as the pandemic.

Murray Gamble commented that the credential recognition issue is huge and a federal and provincial mandate. Regulatory bodies have autonomy and lack desire to change, i.e., engineering. It is difficult for engineers, since unless you are from US or UK, it is difficult to get your license recognized in Canada. Much advocacy is needed. He noted that construction is seeing a labour shortage while workers are getting higher salaries. Need current data. Higher skilled roles are more in demand and all sectors and areas are not some sort of tech with a mix of skills required.

Shannon Down noted that legal professionals also face large barriers when they want to practice law in Canada. How can the barriers be removed and do we have any campaigns to highlight the skills of internationally trained professionals?

Margaret noted the lack of data for planning and shared a useful resource:  
<https://www.buildforce.ca/en>

Tara invited anyone who has further comments or questions on this research to share them with her or Nora and they will make sure there is follow up. This will continue to inform the conversations and work. She thanked Sohrab and Charlene for the presentation.

## **6.2 Partner Survey 2021**

Dan Vandebelt shared the [Immigration Partnership Check-in Summary](#) with the group.

Tracey noted that it appears that there is no implication we should shift direction and keep our effort going.

Tara thanked everyone who participated in providing feedback to the survey.

## **6.3 Refugee Task Force Update and Medical Interpretation Update**

Lucia Harrison shared that the Council's Refugee Task Force continues to meet and that the work to support Ukrainians is making it much more complicated. We don't know who is arriving and where they are arriving and their status is different. Access to housing and healthcare remain challenges. The government is offering some emergency support. Local task force is working on these issues and taking them to a federal roundtable. Medical and interpretation is another area of crisis. Refugees normally seek support from Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre or the Centre for Family Medicine, but both are completely full and cannot take more patients. We need support to ask family doctors to take families from these two organizations so they have more space for newcomers. The availability of

interpretation is also limited. The two pressing issues at the moment are medical care and interpretation.

Lucia expressed her commitment to helping Ukrainian refugees, but also frustration with the refugee situation in countries like Ethiopia and Yemen. She tied the reactions with the mentioning of systematic racism and white supremacy discussed earlier.

Tara added that the group was a result of partners getting together in response to Afghan refugees in the fall, so we were already prepared, but there are many changes and group is evolving a lot. We are looking to move to something more structured.

#### **7. Meeting Adjourned at 2:00pm**

Tracey thanked everyone for participating in the meeting.

**Next Meeting:** 16 June 2022, 12:30-2:00pm

**Location:** Zoom