

SETTLE STEERING GROUP

Minutes

Date: Feb 26, 2019

Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Location: MCC, 50 Kent Ave, Kitchener

Present: Eliseo Martell (Chair, Community Member), Margaret Brockett & Eda Dede & Afnan Naeem (Sanctuary), Ana Luz Martinez (KWMC), Janet Waito (St Louis), Karen Sianchuk & Jennifer Staples (ROW- Public Health), Sherry White (ROW – Housing), Stacey Robertson (Big Brothers Big Sisters), Rachael Lake (WRCLS), Hoda Ghonim (SHORE), Erica Dudszus (KPL), Nermin Ozdemir (House of Friendship, Family Outreach Worker Program), Siba Al-Khadour (Najda Now), Dan Vandebelt & Alejandra Amezquita Gutierrez (Immigration Partnership staff), Ingrid Brand (guest)

Regrets & Resource Members: Crystal Brown & Laura Stoutenburg (Conestoga College), Kaylee Perez (MCC), Anna Schwarz & Marian Rozman (YMCA Immigrant Services), Shelley Campagnola (MCRS), Lynne Griffiths-Fulton (Reception House), Diane McGregor (KW Counselling Services), Sharon Schmidt (Welcome Home), Pauleen Payne (St Louis), Gael Gilbert (SHOW), Priscilla Muzira (ACCKWA), Jenny Flagler George (LHIN), Jennifer Ardon (Canadian Lutheran World Relief), Sanjay Govindaraj (ROW- Citizen Service), Deb Engel (Carizon), Sarah Harjee (CFFM), Sakina Kirefu-Khan (GRH), Sue Black (ROW- Public Health), Ed Kaut (ROW-Income Support), Sarah MacIver (UWaterloo School of Optometry), Liliana Araujo (Community Member), Roger Gilbert (ROW- Children's Services)

1. Welcome

2. Review of Minutes – Dec 4, 2018

- Approved.

3. Approve Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Agenda was approved. No conflicts of interest declared.

4. Immigration Partnership Updates

- Eliseo updated IP Council on recent SSG discussions.
- Alejandra started in January as a Communications Coordinator – her time will be shared between IP and the Crime Prevention Council.
- Ingrid Brand shared that the Belong Steering Group is planning a community campaign for the March 21st International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. They are asking everyone to participate on social media on March 21. See <https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/en/business-opportunities/belongtogetherWR.aspx> for more details.
- The issue of employment program follow-up was raised. It would be helpful for many clients if there could be additional support, follow-up and time spent with clients. Some clients need more than just initial resources or connections.

5. IP Partner Survey Findings

- Dan shared a summary of the survey findings with discussion about what it means for us going forward.

- It is interesting that partners broadly noted there was more collaboration and also that there is a need for more of that.
- We need to keep thinking/acting to ensure we don't go back to ways of working before the Syrian influx and to cement the good practices that were initiated during that time.
- Housing is a systemic/community wide issue and we need to contribute to momentum within and beyond Waterloo Region.
- It was noted that housing was a key issue during the municipal elections and there is a strong will among local municipalities to work on this. Exclusionary zoning is a key thing to move forward on, though the provincial targets aren't strong enough.

6. Legal Supports

- Rachael shared that Waterloo Region Community Legal Services is exploring how to best provide additional immigration law support in Waterloo Region. She gathered feedback from SSG members and others through an online survey in February.
- There are a few local immigration lawyers and only a couple accept legal aid certificates. Affordability is an issue. There is a limited supply of lawyers but the number of immigrants/refugees served has been increasing - particularly refugee claimants.
- It was noted that settlement workers often provide some support with basic tasks such as filling out forms and referrals but could use additional support with: 1) building their knowledge/capacity to support immigrants/refugees with basic tasks and information, 2) being able to refer specific cases that need more experienced legal support to local supports (rather than sending them to legal clinics in Hamilton or Toronto).
- WRCLS has access to interpretation services.
- WRCLS has an employment lawyer. Feel free to refer clients as appropriate. WRCLS can be contacted at 519-743-0254 or www.wrcls.ca

7. Community Action Plan – Activities Updates & Discussion

- Interpretation
 - There are many doctors who either don't know about the LHIN-KWMC interpretation initiative or aren't interested.
- Settlement Sector
 - MCC is hosting a workshop with YMCA and KWMC and local Sponsorship Agreement Holders about how to strengthen the connection between settlement services and private refugee sponsor groups.
 - Settlement hub exploration is continuing.
- Housing
 - The Call for Nominations for the 2019 Newcomer Landlord Award is now open. **ACTION: Please share widely and nominate landlords** that go above and beyond to provide housing to immigrants and refugees. Think about landlords where their stories could encourage others to do likewise. This year we changed it so we aren't requiring people who nominate to make sure the landlords they are nominating know before they submit the nomination – but leaving that until after. Hopefully that encourages people to nominate since they only have to share that they nominated a landlord if that landlord was selected for an award.
 - We should look for ways to highlight all nominated landlords throughout the year – potentially on social media.
- Language Learning
 - Janet shared that the Language Learning Task Group continues to explore how to minimize barriers, child minding, waitlists, etc. They will be exploring 3 areas going forward: workplace language learning options, re-engaging youth and others that have become disconnected from formal language learning, and fast-track English learning options. St Louis is opening up

a new site at Highland Baptist Church. There are some sites with childcare that haven't filled up yet. Any questions can be directed to YMCA Language Assessment at 519-579-9622.

- Health & Mental Health - See the summary in the agenda package.

8. Community Updates

- April 4 is World Refugee Rights Day. It is also when Sanctuary celebrates 6 years and they are beginning a month of celebration. They will have a community celebration on April 4 at Kitchener Market outside of the new Sanctuary space.
- Ana Luz - now has a settlement worker at Chandler Mowat Community Centre on Mondays (speaks Tigrinya, Amharic, Arabic) and clients don't have to live in Chandler Mowat to meet. They also have existing settlement workers at 4 libraries in Waterloo, 3 in Kitchener, and at Sanctuary.
- **ACTION: Dan will send an online poll to gather suggestions for SSG guest speakers.**

9. Next Meetings

- Apr 23, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Jun 25, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Sep 24, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Nov 26, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)

SETTLE STEERING GROUP

Minutes

Date: April 23, 2019

Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Location: MCC, 50 Kent Ave, Kitchener

Present: Eliseo Martell (Chair, Community Member), Eda Dede (Sanctuary), Ana Luz Martinez (KWMC), Janet Waito & Pauleen Payne (St Louis), Crystal Brown & Laura Stoutenburg (Conestoga College), Kaylee Perez (MCC), Anna Schwarz & Marian Rozman (YMCA Immigrant Services), Shelley Campagnola (MCRS), Lynne Griffiths-Fulton (Reception House), Karen Sianchuk & Sue Black & Jennifer Staples (ROW- Public Health), Priscilla Muzira (ACCKWA), Sherry White (ROW – Housing), Deb Engel (Carizon), Rachael Lake (WRCLS), Hoda Ghonim (SHORE), Erica Dudszus (KPL), Nermin Ozdemir (House of Friendship, Family Outreach Worker Program), Dan Vandebelt (Immigration Partnership staff)

Regrets & Resource Members: Diane McGregor (KW Counselling Services), Sharon Schmidt (Welcome Home), Gael Gilbert (SHOW), Jenny Flagler George (LHIN), Stacey Robertson (Big Brothers Big Sisters), Siba Al-Khadour (Najda Now), Jennifer Ardon (Canadian Lutheran World Relief), Sanjay Govindaraj (ROW- Citizen Service), Sarah Harjee (CFFM), Sakina Kirefu-Khan (GRH), Ed Kaut (ROW- Income Support), Sarah MacIver (UWaterloo School of Optometry), Liliana Araujo (Community Member), Roger Gilbert (ROW- Children's Services)

1. Welcome

2. Review of Minutes – Feb 26, 2018

- Approved.

3. Approve Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Agenda was approved. No conflicts of interest declared.

4. Immigration Partnership Updates

- Eliseo updated IP Council on recent SSG discussions.
- Council is planning on meeting with all local municipal councils and will bring up current immigrant/refugee issues and build ownership/connection around them. IP recently published a newsletter on [Racism and Discrimination](#) and the next newsletter will focus on Immigrant Entrepreneurship.
- IP Evaluation Committee discussed an evaluation plan for the next 2 years, including the annual partner survey, bi-annual community survey, Community Action Plan (CAP) review and other evaluation components. The last community survey was quite broad – including employers, service providers, students, general public, etc. Feedback suggested that that wasn't ideal as it was confusing and made the survey longer. The plan is to shift it so that we get information from different groups in different ways. The community survey will focus on immigrants and refugees and the partner survey will include both people meeting around IP tables and other community organizations that provide service to newcomers. We will seek input from employers through the Employer One survey which the Workforce Planning Board leads annually and from the general public about perceptions about immigration through the Waterloo Region Matters survey which the University of Waterloo undertakes annually. We'll also have other surveys for specific subgroups on an as-needed basis – international students, specific groups of employers, etc.

- The next Community Survey will be conducted this June/July so the results can feed into the discussions in the fall about refreshing the CAP. We will survey participants at the Multicultural Festival and other public settings.
- We are getting to the end of our 3-year Community Action Plan (2017-2019). The Evaluation Committee and Council are wanting to do more of a refresh than a wholesale rewrite from scratch. We'll also use the partner survey in the fall to gather information to feed into that.
- We discussed if there 1 or 2 questions that the SSG would want to ask in the partner survey that could inform what we focus on in the refreshed/revised CAP. It was suggested that asking about legal needs in the surveys could be helpful. **ACTION: All to share other suggestions with Dan.**

5. Refugee Claimants – Overview & Issues/Needed Action

- Shelley (MCRS) and Rachael (WRCLS) provided a brief update on provincial budget changes and implications (particularly legal aid) and broader advocacy efforts.
- There was a 30% cut to legal aid announced, including all funding from the provincial government for immigration law. There is some funding from other sources so that Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) will continue to provide minimal immigration law support but only for basis of claim documents. There will be no support for hearings or hearing preparation. Many people will go to hearings self-represented because they can't afford representation. A higher proportion of self-represented claims have their claims denied.
- LAO clinics are tentatively proceeding as usual though they are already tapped out.
- Rachael (at Waterloo Region Community Legal Services) is starting provide legal support on citizenship denials, sponsorships and humanitarian/compassionate applications.
- There will be other implications of cuts on family protection and other vulnerable individuals/families. The means-test threshold may be lowered so fewer people are eligible for legal aid support.
- MCRS is providing support to over 1800 people with more arriving each week. This is a portion of all that come to our community.
- stoplegalaidcuts.ca has been created to provide information and have a template to contact MPPs. Laura Mae Lindo is accepting letters that can document impacts related to this.
- There are other advocacy efforts coming together provincially.
- It could be valuable to have businesses speak to the implications of these issues from their perspective. "If you don't help people you don't help business." The Chamber of Commerce and Workforce Planning Board would be valuable partners. It is also important to have data about the implications. WPB may have relevant statistics.
- Shelley is meeting with the Chamber of Commerce this week. She is also meeting with Karen Redman regarding "open access" (to services regardless of status). **ACTION: If others have relevant meetings like these, please feel free to gather input from the rest of this group before meeting.**
- **ACTION: Eliseo will bring this issue to IP Council.** IP Council discussed this at their last meeting and noted that some broader advocacy issues may become clearer in the coming days/weeks.
- **ACTION: Shelley will share broader advocacy options as they evolve. Debbie will approach the Counselling Collaborative. All to share the implications (stories or data) of these cuts.**
- It was recognized that this is part of an ongoing effort. Each organization can use social media and other mediums to continue the public discussion and share stories/implications.

6. Language Learning Options Overview/Update

- The [Language Learning Options](#) overview document was shared as a reference tool for people serving newcomers. It will be posted on the immigrationwaterlooregion.ca website and shared in the Weekly. This is a very helpful document. This type of overview could be useful for other sectors as well.

- **ACTION: Dan will incorporate the suggestions. Let Dan know if there are any individual corrections or updates.**
- In the past there was a Conestoga program called English in the Working Environment but the funding ended during the 2009 recession. It was noted that workplace language classes are challenging due to the need to have enough learners at a similar language level.
- Conestoga College LINC (<http://www.conestogac.on.ca/language/linc.jsp>) will have summer English classes at their Waterloo Campus (108 University Ave) mornings starting July 2 until July 26. Classes will run from 9:00am until 12:00pm.
- St Louis (<https://stlouis.wcdsb.ca/programsandcourses/english-language>) will have summer classes July 2 until August 9 with classes morning, afternoon and evening. Registration starts May 22. In the fall, St Louis will have 6 more ESL classes (including afternoon, evening and Saturday classes). The St Francis location is closing for renovations for a year and classes will be moved to: Christ the King (167 Thaler Ave, near Fairway/Weber); additional classes at Forest Hill and Main Campus in Kitchener. The St. Francis LINC program is moving to the Highland Campus, including childminding. This location also has some clothing giveaways and other supports.

7. Community Action Plan – Activities Updates & Discussion

- Interpretation
 - There are 144 primary care professionals/groups, 14 community support groups and 7 mental health groups have registered so far for the LHIN-KWMC interpretation initiative. While there is good uptake, this is still a small number of the healthcare professionals that are eligible so please keep promoting.
 - **ACTION: Ana Luz to inquire whether she can share a list of doctors that are already registered with SSG partners** so we can know who has that available when we refer clients.
 - The LHIN had to reschedule their meeting about interpretation with the patient relations staff from all local hospitals to June. In the interim they have been reaching out to collect information on who to connect with at each hospital when issues do arise so that we have one go to person.
- Settlement Sector
 - o The provincial research project Allies in Refugee Integration will hold a design workshop in Kitchener on May 17 to explore concrete ideas for increasing collaboration between the settlement sector and private refugee sponsorship.
 - o Eliseo noted that coordination and the 2015-2016 Syrian welcome process has come up several times and specifically the concern that we don't lose some of the model and ways of working that emerged at that time. It would be useful to have an informal lunch discussion about the key pieces that we need to integrate into our work moving forward. **ACTION: Let Dan know if you are interested in joining this conversation.** We should incorporate the CCBR research about the Syrian welcome process.
- Health & Mental Health
 - The young girl in Calgary who died by suicide came as a refugee from Syria a few years ago. Mental health is often not talked about. It is important to reach out to newcomers around mental health.

8. Community Updates

- MP Marwan Tabbara is hosting a townhall meeting on April 25, with interpretation.
- Sanctuary is hosting their 6th birthday party on May 4.

9. Next Meetings

- Jun 25, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Sep 24, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Nov 26, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)

SETTLE STEERING GROUP

Minutes

Date: June 25, 2019

Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Location: MCC, 50 Kent Ave, Kitchener

Present: Eliseo Martell (Chair, Community Member), Eda Dede (Sanctuary), Ana Luz Martinez (KWMC), Crystal Brown (Conestoga College), Kaylee Perez (MCC), Kris Marchetti & Jennifer Staples (ROW- Public Health), Priscilla Muzira (ACCKWA), Hoda Ghonim (SHORE), Erica Dudszus (KPL), Nermin Ozdemir (House of Friendship, Family Outreach Worker Program), Tara Bedard & Dan Vandebelt (Immigration Partnership staff), Heather Menaldo (KidsAbility, guest)

Regrets & Resource Members: Diane McGregor (KW Counselling Services), Janet Waito & Pauleen Payne (St Louis), Laura Stoutenburg (Conestoga College), Anna Schwarz & Marian Rozman (YMCA Immigrant Services), Shelley Campagnola (MCRS), Lynne Griffiths-Fulton (Reception House), Gael Gilbert (SHOW), Jenny Flagler George (LHIN), Sue Black (ROW – Public Health), Stacey Robertson (Big Brothers Big Sisters), Sherry White (ROW – Housing), Deb Engel (Carizon), Rachael Lake (WRCLS), Siba Al-Khadour (Levant Canada), Jennifer Ardon (Canadian Lutheran World Relief), Sanjay Govindaraj (ROW- Citizen Service), Sarah Harjee (CFFM), Sakina Kirefu-Khan (GRH), Ed Kaut (ROW-Income Support), Sarah MacIver (UWaterloo School of Optometry), Liliana Araujo (Community Member), Roger Gilbert (ROW- Children’s Services)

1. Welcome

2. Review of Minutes – Apr 23, 2019

- Approved.

3. Approve Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Agenda was approved. No conflicts of interest declared.

4. Developmental Services Overview (Kidsability)

- Heather Menaldo (KidsAbility intake team member) shared an overview of KidsAbility services and what they provide, with a particular focus on newcomers, and a broad overview of what is provided in the community in the developmental services world.
ACTION: Heather will share her presentation with the group through Dan.
- Transportation and interpretation are key challenges.

5. Immigration Partnership Updates

- Eliseo updated IP Council on recent SSG discussions. Council has presented to Waterloo Region and Cambridge municipal councils and will be engaging with others in the coming months to inform about immigrant issues and IP’s role.
- Dan shared about the Immigration Profile that was recently released (www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrationProfile). It includes Waterloo Region data on immigration, language, secondary migration, temporary residents, international students, etc. **ACTION: Dan to give an update on the data at a future SSG meeting.**
- Tara gave an overview of plans for the Immigration Partnership annual forum this fall. IP typically hosts a forum annually for partners and other stakeholders to collectively discuss pertinent issues. The forum will be this November and will look forward to the next 10 years and where we want to be as a community regarding immigration. We are exploring what to

include – particularly deeper involvement of municipal and business communities and how they can be involved, support and be part of collective efforts. Council wants to workshop a series of problems and what do we want to do over the next 10 years. Each steering group to propose 2 problem statements for discussion.

- Affordable housing is key – both availability and procedures to rent are critical difficulties for tenants (i.e. you sometimes need to pay 1 full year in advance to get a place; credit/rental history requirement). Seniors also have a very difficult time.
- Physicians that are willing to take on newcomers/refugees is a struggle.
- Accreditation for skilled refugees is an issue, as is language ability to get a job or move up with jobs. Matching employment needs with local job vacancies – connecting with education/employment with individuals. We need to be able to track needs quickly enough to address shortages.
- Interpretation and exploring technology to help learn the language or bridge language gaps.
- Children - school and social performance is sometimes an issue. We don't talk about it enough. This may be a forum discussion topic or something that we otherwise have preliminary discussions about at SSG.

6. Immigration Matters Survey - Community Survey Promotion

- We too often lack the data to make good program decisions. This biannual survey will be our means to do that – but we need to promote it. We focused it this year on just immigrants (including all categories of permanent residents, refugees, temporary residents, international students, refugee claimants, etc.). Please promote among clients, family, friends and networks. It is your survey and will inform our priorities for our collective work.
- We have multilingual surveyors that will be gathering surveys in public settings to ensure we also hear from immigrants that aren't receiving settlement or other services.
- Our target is 1000. The survey closes July 9.

7. Community Action Plan – Activities Updates & Discussion

- Interpretation
 - Ana Luz is inquiring about sharing the list of physicians that have registered with the LHIN-KWMC initiative so we can know when we refer patients if free interpretation is available and if they can ask for that.
- Settlement Sector
 - At our last SSG meeting we said we would pull together an informal conversation to reflect on the Syrian welcome process and what we can learn from that and further cement in our context now. That conversation is scheduled for June 27 and is open to anyone to join.
- Housing
 - Dan provided an update on the Wellbeing Waterloo Region discussions regarding community-wide affordable housing efforts. This will allow for opportunities for us to contribute our voice to a coordinated Waterloo Region effort.
- Language Learning
 - Conestoga has just finished classes for the year and in the fall will be adding more late afternoon and evening classes (intermediate levels), looking at a technology language class (for people in the IT/tech sector), and piloting online classes for business/accounting (for CLB 6+) for short 20hr modules over 2 weeks.
 - St Louis – some uncertainty about when registration will happen due to provincial funding. **ACTION: Dan to ask Janet/Pauleen for an update.**

- **Health & Mental Health**
 - Dan and Lynne are representing the Immigration Partnership on the Waterloo Region Oral Health Coalition, looking dental health issues. The group is planning to creating a dentist list and we made the suggestion that it should include whether they take IFHP and speak other languages. Over the last couple years the group has contributed to successful advocacy for a provincial dental program for seniors (among other efforts). While all the details aren't yet clear, the provincial government has noted that they are committed to a dental program for seniors.
 - The Mental Health of Refugees working group decided to discontinue meeting recently. The group started in 2015 when Sanctuary invited all agencies providing mental health services in our community with CMHA chairing. It evolved into the Mental Health working group through the Syrian welcoming process in late 2015 and 2016. It was a place to share experiences, resources, new developments, and educational opportunities among direct service workers in the refugee mental health sphere. The group went from meeting monthly to quarterly and recently decided to discontinue as it was felt that the needs were being filled – there were stronger relationships and connections between people working in the field and there were other means to regularly share information such as the Immigration Weekly.
 - It would be useful for the SSG to carve out time for a conversation about mental health once a year to update and check in on needs and opportunities. Other mental health partners could be invited to the conversation.

8. Community Updates

- September 17 (1-7pm) the City of Cambridge is celebrating Newcomer Day. All are encouraged to come out and support.

9. Next Meetings

- Sep 24, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Nov 26, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)

SETTLE STEERING GROUP

Minutes

Date: September 24, 2019

Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Location: MCC, 50 Kent Ave, Kitchener

Present: Eliseo Martell (Chair, Community Member), Eda Dede (Sanctuary), Ana Luz Martinez (KWMC), Debbie Engel (Carizon), Kris Marchetti & Jennifer Staples (ROW- Public Health), Hoda Ghonim (SHORE), Erica Dudszus (KPL), Nermin Ozdemir (House of Friendship, Family Outreach Worker Program), Laura Stoutenburg (Conestoga College), Anna Schwarz & Marian Rozman (YMCA Immigrant Services), Barb Van Giessen (The Working Centre), Rozina Shaheen (community member), Dan Vandebelt (Immigration Partnership staff)

Regrets & Resource Members: Crystal Brown (Conestoga College), Kaylee Perez (MCC), Priscilla Muzira (ACCKWA), Diane McGregor (KW Counselling Services), Janet Waito & Pauleen Payne (St Louis), Shelley Campagnola (MCRS), Lynne Griffiths-Fulton (Reception House), Gael Gilbert (SHOW), Sue Black (ROW – Public Health), Stacey Robertson (Big Brothers Big Sisters), Sherry White (ROW – Housing), Rachael Lake (WRCLS), Siba Al-Khadour (Levant Canada), Jennifer Ardon (Canadian Lutheran World Relief), Sanjay Govindaraj (ROW- Citizen Service), Sarah Harjee (CFFM), Sakina Kirefu-Khan (GRH), Ed Kaut (ROW-Income Support), Sarah MacIver (UWaterloo School of Optometry), Liliana Araujo (Community Member), Roger Gilbert (ROW- Children’s Services)

1. Welcome

2. Review of Minutes – Jun 25, 2019

- Approved.

3. Approve Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Agenda was approved. No conflicts of interest declared.

4. Immigration Partnership Updates

- IP Council and Tara have shared delegations at several local municipal council meetings to give them an overview of the issues facing immigrants and build those partnerships
- Federal Election survey of candidates – we will share candidate responses to the questions. The SSG related question was focused on housing and affordability.
- Our Community Action Plan (CAP) is our strategic plan for IP – and the current one is from 2017-2019. This fall we will be refreshing that – not building it from scratch but assessing where we are currently at and where should we focus our efforts. The plan is to have a half-day get together to discuss and draft this in November. More information to follow.
- Council discussed the provincial planned elimination of the Transition Child Benefit. IP will write a letter to local MPPs about this issue. Region of Waterloo Employment and Income Support will have an information session for local partners to talk about supporting those affected (Oct 1 and 10). A flyer was circulated and Dan will share by email.
- Please fill in the partner survey. It is a valuable check-in on what all are seeing and will be useful in informing the CAP refresh.

5. Immigration Profile and Immigration Matters Survey Findings Overview

- We are data-rich right now. We have lots of information that we are busy analyzing and integrating so we can use it to inform the CAP refresh and other ongoing work, including:

- Immigration Profile (together with Public Health) using census data and some custom requests from Statistics Canada and IRCC (i.e. secondary migration data, international student permits)
- Waterloo Region Matters – survey of public perceptions of immigration
- Immigration Matters survey - survey of immigrants/refugees/students
- Wellbeing Waterloo Region survey – This was a community-wide survey of 5000 people living in Waterloo Region. We were able to access the data and explore differences between recent immigrants, established immigrants and Canadian-born individuals (ranging from leisure time use, discrimination, self-reported physical and mental health, trust in police or neighbours, etc.). We’re comparing this data to our Immigration Matters survey data.
- Dan shared some data highlights from the Immigration Profile report. To access the full report see: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/immigrationprofile
- Immigration Matters immigrant survey
 - A big thanks to all partners who helped gather 1090 responses to the survey!
 - Dan shared some data highlights. A report will be compiled and shared.

6. Community Updates

- All shared a brief update on their programming, new things for the new season and critical or emerging needs for the coming year.
- Public Health – PH’s Healthy Babies program will now screen all new parents in WR to increase reach and ensure people don’t fall through the cracks.
- Carizon - The Promise of Partnership program has been funded through IRCC for group mental health. The programming (in 8-week cycles) will be promoted in the Immigration Weekly emails. Carizon will have discussions with community partners about their newly funded individual mental health counselling (likely starting in April). Seniors was also noted as a gap and Carizon received funding for this. They will be reaching out to plan how to best fill this gap. Contact Debbie in the next few weeks if you are interested in being part of these conversations.
- KWMC – KWMC continues to run Let’s Talk program with KPL to help keep youth in school. A pilot project will help inform families about how to sponsor family members that were not included in the original refugee application.
- This Friday there is a climate change protest in uptown Waterloo.
- YMCA – There have been lots of school registrations and good success with conversation circles and NOW (newcomer orientation) week. Citizenship support group is very successful, as are immunization and dental clinics at the YCMA in Cambridge. YMCA is still offering settlement/employment support in Stratford.
- Conestoga – Conestoga LINC has some CLB 5-8 spaces and some with childcare available, some late afternoon classes available. There are 2 new OSLT pilots in finance & accounting (started Sep23, CLB 6-9) and entrepreneurship classes (Sep26, CLB 6-9).
- KPL – All the KW English conversation circles will be updated on their website as a resource for the community. KPL is hosting an ILTS tips session for people taking test.
- SHORE Centre – Women’s group is starting again Oct 8; Moms and Daughters in multiple locations starting Oct 14 and Nov 20

7. Political Landscape Changes – collective updates and discussion

- Nov 1 the Provincial Government will be eliminating the Transition Child Benefit. This will have significant impacts on refugee claimant families and others. Region of Waterloo Employment and Income Support will be hosting 2 sessions about the planned

elimination of the TCB and Ontario Works changes. *[Note that the Provincial Government has canceled the planned elimination of TCB since the Sep24 SSG meeting.]*

- Legal aid – Federal government provided some funding but it is only temporary – still need a longer term funding solution.
- Cuts in education – some boards have cut teachers. Some shared that class sizes seem to have increased.
- Health – a number of changes are in process – health teams, PH reorganization of boundary changes, etc. Waterloo Region-Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph-Halton is anticipated be the largest grouping of the 10 PH units.

6. Community Action Plan – Activities Updates & Discussion

- Eliseo shared highlights from informal lunch discussion (June 27) about the Syrian welcome process - what we learned and what we want to ensure we don't lose or collectively need to bring back from that experience. It was acknowledged that then it was a different time with different factors in play, but there were some things then that made it work well that we could consider in more detail now (i.e. media were involved – how can we involve them further? Key decision-makers with decision-making authority were involved – can we seek those people out and continue to work with them perhaps in separate settings/meetings or in our existing groups? Stronger connections with municipalities – start with municipal council delegations and continue to build stronger connections; employment came up years ago and it keeps coming up (talent shortage, employment as a key challenge, etc) – what does this look like moving forward? How to ensure that communication is working well between steering committees and Council – updates, advocacy, etc.).
- It is hoped that these discussions will continue during the CAP refresh process, hub conversations, Council and Steering Group discussions, etc.
- Welcome Home, a transitional housing program for refugee claimants and long-time SSG member, is transitioning from Ray of Hope to Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support (MCRS). MCRS is also taking on the Open Homes program, which Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church volunteers ran for years to provide temporary accommodation for refugee claimants in local families' homes.
- Please nominate landlords for the Newcomer Landlord Award until October 4. The award will be presented at the National Housing Day celebration which is on November 21 from 9am to noon at Knox Church in Waterloo.

7. Community Updates

- September 17 (1-7pm) the City of Cambridge is celebrating Newcomer Day. All are encouraged to come out and support.
- The Ride for Refugees is a fundraiser that many local partners are participating in on Oct 5.

8. Next Meetings

- Nov 26, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)

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Minutes

Date: November 26, 2019

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Location: MCC, 50 Kent Ave, Kitchener

Present: Eliseo Martell (Chair, Community Member), Laura Stoutenburg (Vice-Chair, Conestoga College), Ana Luz Martinez (KWMC), Kris Marchetti & Sue Black & Crystal Swinton (ROW- Public Health), Hoda Ghonim (SHORE), Nermin Ozdemir (House of Friendship, Family Outreach Worker Program), Stephanie Schruders (MCC), Sherry White (ROW – Housing), Priscilla Muzira (ACCKWA), Imtenan Abd-El-Razik & Rachael Lake (WRCLS), Dan Vandebelt (Immigration Partnership staff), Debra Handler (guest)

Regrets & Resource Members: Crystal Brown (Conestoga College), Eda Dede (Sanctuary), Kaylee Perez (MCC), Debbie Engel (Carizon), Erica Dudzus (KPL), Diane McGregor (KW Counselling Services), Janet Waito & Pauleen Payne (St Louis), Shelley Campagnola (MCRS), Lynne Griffiths-Fulton (Reception House), Gael Gilbert (SHOW), Jennifer Staples (ROW- Public Health), Sheri Follett (Big Brothers Big Sisters), Siba Al-Khadour (Levant Canada), Anna Schwarz & Marian Rozman (YMCA Immigrant Services), Barb Van Giessen (The Working Centre), Rozina Shaheen (community member), Jennifer Ardon (Canadian Lutheran World Relief), Sanjay Govindaraj (ROW- Citizen Service), Sarah Harjee (CFFM), Sakina Kirefu-Khan (GRH), Ed Kaut (ROW- Income Support), Sarah MacIver (UWaterloo School of Optometry), Liliana Araujo (Community Member), Roger Gilbert (ROW- Children’s Services)

1. Welcome

2. Review of Minutes – Sep 24, 2019

- Approved.

3. Approve Agenda & Declaration of Conflict of Interest

- Agenda was approved. No conflicts of interest declared. Laura will chair after Eliseo leaves at 1.30pm.

4. Guest Speaker: Region of Waterloo Employment and Income Support – Overview and Newcomer Issues (Debra Handler)

- Region of Waterloo Community Services Department recently integrated Ontario Works, Employment Services, Housing and Child Care. The reception areas are at 99 Regina St in Waterloo, 235 King St in Kitchener and 150 Main St in Cambridge. Clients can go to any location or call from anywhere but if they pick up a cheque they need to go to the proper building (>90% of OW clients use direct deposit). All 3 locations have an integrated reception (Welcome Centres) for income, housing and child care services.
- Interpreters are requested when needed for the OW application process. Currently, overall demand for interpreters (and overall applications in general) are down slightly. ROW prefers face to face interpretation but also use phone interpretation when needed.
- There are a lot of clients that don’t speak English well. Often they have others help them out or use Google Translate or other apps.
- When things aren’t as busy (i.e. early in the day) staff help clients find work but in the early afternoon when it is busier they more often provide employment search brochures.
- Clients don’t need to be on OW to get employment support through Region of Waterloo.
- One challenge is that there are some languages where interpreters aren’t available.

- Please encourage any interested clients to become trained interpreters if they speak languages such as Afar, Tigrinya, Somali or Rohingya. The individual languages needed is regularly shifting.
- Could the training/education sector create a program where people get funding for the training but would need to pay it back if they left or offer other incentives?
- There is a shortage for specific employable skills. Can we retrain people on OW in those skills? Ontario Works will provide funding for some skill-specific training through colleges (i.e. forklift, drivers, PSW, hair dresser/culinary arts through Conestoga, etc.). The individual needs to talk to their case worker and specifically ask about training opportunities for what they want to do.
- It was suggested that the employment system doesn't seem to be working well to connect newcomers to meaningful employment. Some noted that some of the newcomers they hear from feel they aren't getting the supports they need to actually get a job.
 - The connection with employers needs to be stronger. Both sides need to be strengthened - training for newcomers and connecting with employers.
 - Canada needs to better match newcomers to needed skills.
 - It was suggested that ESL classes could work with newcomers earlier to talk about what careers and jobs are good fits for them and that there could be more collaboration between ESL and work-focused agencies to jointly offer this at CLB level 5, 6, or 7. Could employment services or Conestoga College Career Centre come to ESL classes to explain needs? This has been done some in the past. Laura and Ana Luz could explore this further (or with St Louis to be more flexible to work with claimants). This requires additional resourcing (MCI?). The language learning task group could explore this idea as well.
 - There needs to be greater collaboration between industry and language learning and job seekers. Job seekers need to explore their interests in the context of current labour needs.
- Employment Ontario is launching job matching software (incl assessment, readiness, resume, etc.) and the outcomes should be analyzed. It is important to disaggregate the Waterloo Region Employment Ontario data/outcomes (i.e. by gender/language).
- The importance of employment to settlement and IP work in general needs to be brought to the IP Planning Day.
- Debra will bring these discussions and suggestions to ROW Employment and Income Support.

5. Immigration Partnership Updates

- Previously, SSG and IP Council discussed the provincial planned elimination of the Transition Child Benefit (TCB) and wrote an advocacy letter to local MPPs. Since that time the Provincial Government canceled the planned elimination of TCB.
- Through the summer and fall IP met with local municipal councils to inform them about immigration/settlement issues and build their awareness and support.
- The BSG is hosting the Global Migration Film Festival in December, planning an additional WR Multicultural Connections Forum to connect ethnocultural groups and starting to plan for the next public education campaign (gathered input from SSG and across IP for this).
- The WSG is continuing to explore an employer-facing newcomer employment/talent hub, engaging employers at employment fairs, Chamber or Workforce Planning Board or other events, etc.
- The Newcomer Landlord Awards were handed out last Thursday. For more information and landlord stories see www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/landlordaward

- The Immigration Matters Survey report is almost done. The data from that and other sources of local information was compiled into a single summary document for the November 29 IP planning day so discussions are based on available evidence and respond to what newcomers and others are saying. Contact Dan if you have any questions or need additional analysis of the data. IP will be refreshing our Community Action Plan (CAP) which will outline our strategic directions for the coming 5 years.
- Dan presented at the Pathways to Prosperity national conference in Toronto about the Immigration Matters survey and there was significant interest in our local work.

6. Community Updates & Discussions

- Refugee Law Services (Imtenan Abd-El-Razik & Rachael Lake, WRCLS)
 - Imtenan and Rachael gave an update on new refugee law services available through WRCLS. Imtenan (abdelrai@lao.on.ca) is a new staff lawyer at WRCLS specializing in immigration and refugee law. She can assist/advise clients with their refugee and immigration matters, including protection claims, admissibility, applications related to domestic violence, H&C applications, and family sponsorship. Other suggested needs are: migrant worker supports, and summary advice for Group of Five refugee sponsorships. Imtenan also speaks Arabic.
 - Rachael (laker@lao.on.ca) will continue to provide immigration law services through WRCLS including answering questions, and providing advice and assistance with completing forms related to spousal and family class sponsorships, citizenship, and humanitarian and compassionate applications. Rachel also provides services at Spectrum.
 - WRCLS can also do community legal education presentations at ESL classes or other locations, providing it is in areas of law they support (housing, OW/ODSP, etc.).
 - Services are free to those who qualify financially. Contact WRCLS for more information or to refer (519-743-0254 or <http://wrcls.ca>).
- Seniors Dental Program (Sue Black & Crystal Swinton, Public Health)
 - Sue and Crystal shared about the new Ontario seniors dental care program (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/dental-care-low-income-seniors>) which provides free, routine dental care for eligible seniors 65 years or older, living on low income.
 - The first phase of the program rollout in Waterloo Region will be at KDCHC in Kitchener and Langs in Cambridge, expanding in phase 2 to Woolwich.
 - Undocumented refugees without a SIN number and who have not filed taxes can apply with a guarantor (specific professions), and be approved for the year. There is a co-payment only for dentures (\$80). Geographic boundaries aren't bounded by municipalities. As it starts up the program is focused primarily on people in pain.
- RSTP training session on Groups of Five refugee sponsorship (Ana Luz Martinez)
 - The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) is offering training for people who want to sponsor a refugee in a Group of Five process (Dec 7). KWMC is hoping there will be regular sessions in 2020. The sessions will cover sponsorship responsibilities and how to fill out the forms.
- Allies in Refugee Integration research project (Kaylee Perez & Dan Vandebelt)
 - Dan shared an RFP for the Allies in Refugee Integration project this past week (Dec 6 application deadline). The [Allies for Refugee Integration](#) project is a partnership of OCASI and Refugee 613 and is seeking organizations working in Ontario who have experience serving privately sponsored refugees to implement a pilot project in January-December 2020. Pilot projects focus on testing out 1) a case management model for sponsored refugees that involves both settlement and sponsors, or 2) knowledge exchange events designed to bring together sponsors and settlement to

share information and build trust. For more information and to apply, download the RFP at: <http://ocasi.org/careers-ocasi>.

- Family Outreach Program (Nermin Ozdemir, House of Friendship)
 - Nermin shared about the Family Outreach Program (<https://www.houseoffriendship.org/how-we-help/family-neighbourhood-supports/family-outreach-program>) which provides support and referrals for families on low income with children living with them that are age 17 and under. There are outreach workers in 32 sites (many community/neighbourhood centres) but they can visit homes. The families they see are roughly with 50% newcomers and 50% Canadian-born.
 - Most referrals come from Ontario Works caseworkers but also from other agencies, and people can self-refer by phone (519-742-8327 x240), email (info@familyoutreach.ca) or visit any of the outreach sites.
 - Outreach workers speak Turkish, Azari, Farsi, Dari, Romanian and Spanish and they can arrange volunteer interpreters in Turkish, Spanish, Somali, Polish, Italian, Tigrinya, Arabic (Syrian & Sudanese dialects), Urdu, Hindi, Swahili and Italian.
 - Outreach workers refer often to many different programs – including settlement services.

7. Other Updates

- Sherry shared recent changes to provincial housing legislation impacting local community housing and subsidized housing processes. As of July 2020, individuals on the waiting list will have 1 offer rather than 3. If it is refused individuals are moved to the bottom of the waiting list. Region of Waterloo housing staff will be working with clients to update their site selections and are looking at a providing information in multiple languages. The way rents for RGI units are calculated is also changing. Individuals will no longer have to report income increases (rents will be calculated based on income tax returns). It is important for clients to therefore file taxes. If going to school full time their income will be exempted from the RGI calculation. Sherry will share more information through Dan.

8. Next Meetings

- IP Community Action Plan Retreat – Nov 29, 2019 (Contact Dan if you have not RSVP'd and want to attend.)
- Feb 11, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Apr 28, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Jun 23, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Sep 22, 1-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)
- Nov 24-3pm at MCC (50 Kent Ave)