

Federal Election 2015 Waterloo Region Candidate Comments on Immigration Topics

1. Responses to Questions Posed During All Candidate Meetings

Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries/YWCA All Candidate Meetings

Kitchener South-Hespeler

The Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act increased eligibility criteria for immigrants seeking to apply for Canadian citizenship, and also reduced the status of their citizenship by making it revocable in some circumstances. Immigrants also face significant hurdles to family reunification, which can take years and years. These are deterrents to applying for citizenship and negatively impact belonging. How does your party intend to support immigrants and refugees in becoming Canadian citizens, developing roots and contributing to thriving local communities and economies?

LIBERAL: Party plans to double the number of family members allowed under family reunification, to fully restore the Interim Federal Health Program for refugees and reduce wait times for application processing.

GREEN: Party plans to reduce hurdles to family reunification and reduce employment barriers for immigrants in the country.

NDP: Party plans to increase the number of family members allowed under family reunification and to put an Ombudsperson in place to receive complaints with respect to immigration processes and processing times.

With parties committing to increasing the number of refugees being resettled to Canada, what additional funding for settlement services will your party make available and will federally-funded settlement services be available to all categories of refugees?

LIBERAL: Party plans to commit \$200 million dollars to refugee sponsorship and settlement.

GREEN: Expressed sympathy for the plight of refugees.

NDP: Expressed sympathy for the plight of refugees.



Cambridge-North Dumfries

Many immigrants and refugees, including those who are highly skilled and educated, face significant barriers to accessing meaningful, well-paid work in Waterloo Region, including lack of Canadian work experience, complicated and expensive processes for foreign credential recognition, etc. Recent immigrants are twice as likely to be unemployed as the general population and they earn an average of 31% less per annum. All while many services are in place to support them. What new measures will your party take to support immigrants in getting into meaningful work and contributing to Canada's economic success faster?

GREEN: Party commits to focusing on being clearer in marketing to prospective immigrants about reality in the country so expectations are matched to what they will face upon arrival, increasing English and French language training support, increasing the number of people allowed to immigrate through family reunification so workers are incentivized to bring family and settle, in partnership with the provincial government.

CONSERVATIVE: Party has doubled funding for foreign credential recognition programs, increased loans to immigrants for credentialing, upskilling, introduced the parent and grandparent supervisa to help immigrants bring their family members to live with them, and launched the Express Entry system to attract immigrants who are more likely to adapt well.

LIBERAL: Party commits to bringing 25,000 Syrian refugees to the country immediately and providing them with support.

NDP: Party commits to continue funding employment supports, raising the federal minimum wage, focusing on youth employment and credits to help immigrants in work and support their settlement.

INDEPENDENT: By 2030 all new growth will be through immigration. Would commit to increased support from settlement into work, increased provision of English and French language training for immigrants and increasing the numbers of people allowed to immigrate through family reunification.

Greater KW Chamber of Commerce All Candidates Meetings

Kitchener-Conestoga

What measures will your party take to help employers overcome the barriers to hire needed skilled immigrants?

[@Albrecht4KitCon](#) says we need to help support language training and match or retrain new skilled immigrants in trades

[@JamesNDP4KitCon](#) says the system needs to be more transparent and more recognition of foreign trained skills

[@VoteTimLouis](#) says immigration system has been mismanaged under Harper era and there needs to be better family reunification system

Kitchener-Centre

What would your party do to help streamline small and medium sized businesses hire much needed skilled immigrants?

@ElectWoodworth says the Conservatives have done a great deal to help improve literacy skills for new foreign workers & many other programs

@SusanCadell says govt has failed in streamlining the immigration process & family reunification. Tax incentives will be implemented too

@VoteRajSaini says skills & credential recognition should be priority for highly skilled immigrants and help retain international students

2. Responses to the Immigration Partnership Candidate Survey

Immigrants face significant barriers to settling in their new communities. Immigration levels are growing nationally, current projections for Ontario are slightly down and the profile of immigrants who will arrive in the future is expected to change. Settlement agencies that support immigrants on their journey face great ongoing service needs, uncertain funding and a lack of cohesion between federal and provincial policies and funds. If elected, what concrete steps will you take to harmonise federal-provincial efforts aiming to address immigrant settlement needs and to support sustainability of the settlement sector in Waterloo Region?

NDP: The NDP recognizes that immigration strengthens our society and our economy. But under the Conservatives, it's becoming harder for immigrants to come to Canada and succeed. Too many immigrants have been left stranded on the margins of our job market. An NDP government will work to restore fairness and transparency to our immigration system, make family reunification a priority, and restore the \$30 million in funding that the Conservatives failed to spend on foreign credential recognition programming. We will also work with the immigrant and refugee serving sector to remove unnecessary restrictions on supportive services and to expand the reach of settlement services.

GREEN: Canada has not made national strategies in key areas including immigration. We need to have a federal partnership with the provinces and municipalities to understand what skills in the job market are being sought after cross-checked to the skills of immigrants coming to their new home. Certification acceptance or equivalency testing needs to be improved and adequately funded and structured to be efficient at getting newcomers into the workforce as soon as is possible.

(Candidate: David Weber)

1. Work with provinces to ensure greater cohesion between federal and provincial policies and funds.
2. Ascertain service needs and funding required by the agencies as a means to examine what can be offered federally to support these needs.
4. Where possible, simplify the processes of immigration to save time and finances for both immigrants, agencies, and provincial and federal bodies governing immigration.



3. Enact programs and/or funding plans which meet the needs of the agencies and provinces to support the immigration needs.
(Candidate: Nicolas Wendler)

Refugees and refugee claimants face very serious health and mental health conditions. At the same time, health coverage provided under the Interim Federal Health Plan is limited and complex, causing some health care providers to refuse even limited treatment to refugees and claimants. If elected, what concrete steps will you take to promote accessible and appropriate health care for refugees and claimants in Waterloo Region?

NDP: An NDP government will abide by the ruling of the Federal Court and fully restore the Interim Federal Health Program, putting an end to the current confusing system which has resulted in even refugees who have healthcare coverage being turned away by medical practitioners and hospitals who don't understand the rules and don't want to be left on the hook for costs.

GREEN: The federal government has taken an adversarial approach to the benefits given to refugees and immigrants, including court challenges in order to reduce benefits. I would not support such actions and positions, but would rather give equal coverage to all Canadians and would be Canadians that are in the process. Neglecting proper care for these individuals makes them sicker and more of a financial burden after the fact. It is the financial and moral thing to step up and give them the services they need as they need them.

Many immigrants, including those who are highly skilled and educated, face significant barriers to accessing meaningful, well-paid work in Waterloo Region, including lack of Canadian work experience, complicated and expensive processes for having foreign credentials recognized and language barriers, among others. Recent immigrants are twice as likely to be unemployed as the general population and they earn an average of 31% less per annum. If elected, what measures will you take to support immigrants to get into meaningful work (faster) and be more economically successful in Waterloo Region?

NDP: It's clear helping new immigrants just isn't a priority for Stephen Harper. His government failed to spend nearly \$30 million that was set aside to help new Canadians get their credentials recognized. In fact, recognition of foreign credentials remains the number one barrier to obtaining employment in Canada, according to the government's own Panel on the Employment Challenges of New Canadians.

An NDP government will help newcomers to get their skills and credentials recognized, obtain Canadian experience, and achieve the remuneration their skills and education deserve. We will restore the \$30 million in funding for the Foreign Credential Recognition Program; offer grants to professional bodies to develop harmonized national standards with a single point of contact; expand the practice of orientation sessions in visa offices to educate and support potential immigrants; and create an awareness campaign for employers to encourage them to give immigrants their first opportunity.

GREEN: We need to have a federal partnership with the provinces and municipalities to understand what skills in the job market are being sought after cross-checked to the skills of immigrants coming to their new home. This could be based upon the Magnet



model already used in colleges. Certification acceptance or equivalency testing also needs to be improved and adequately funded. It should be structured to be efficient at getting newcomers into the workforce as soon as is possible.

Employers seeking to hire immigrants to address labour market needs face serious challenges to doing so. Immigration processes can take too long and be too inflexible to meet real time employment needs, and the rising cost of hiring immigrants deters many employers. At the same time, talented immigrants already in the community may fit their positions but employers face difficulties finding these people. If elected, what concrete measures will you take to support employers, particularly SMEs, to overcome hurdles to hiring immigrants – those already in the country and those abroad?

NDP: Under the Conservatives, potential immigrants have been frustrated by huge backlogs and long wait times for immigration processing. The Conservatives mishandling of immigration drove employers to the Temporary Foreign Worker program, which forced them to bring in workers on a temporary basis, unable to access permanent residence and citizenship. In order to fix the mess that they had made, the Conservatives then created the Express Entry system. But unfortunately, they created it in such a way that it discriminates against international students and high skilled temporary foreign workers, thereby excluding many of the highly skilled and Canadian educated workers who could thrive and succeed in Canada. An NDP government will fix the broken immigration processing system and provide pathways to citizenship for all temporary foreign workers.

GREEN: Have a national database of the needs for skilled workers for industries and have immigration services assist newcomers into accessing that information and aid in the connections. There needs to be a reduced times for immigration processing and eliminate the legislative barriers that prevent them from taking on meaningful employment.

MARXIST-LENINIST: Business should not, in our opinion, be the target of special subsidization programs. Government assistance should be provided to individual workers themselves for training, whether in language or other skills, while it is the duty of businesses to train employees to the level required by their particular enterprise. The local government employment agencies, such as Human Resources Canada should be charged with the task of ensuring that all local companies are provided with information on the available workers in the tri-cities region. In regards to overcoming hurdles for immigration to Canada of workers with required skills from abroad, the MLPC thinks that all the possibilities of training workers in Canada should be exhausted before special measures are instituted to bring in workers from abroad.

The Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act increased eligibility criteria for immigrants seeking to apply for Canadian citizenship, and at the same time reduced the status of their citizenship once conferred by making it revocable in some circumstances. For immigrants, this can be a deterrent to applying for citizenship and negatively impacts their sense of belonging. If elected, what concrete measures do you intend to take to support immigrants in Waterloo Region in their efforts to belong and become Canadian citizens?



NDP: Under Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, it has become harder and harder for immigrants to come to Canada and succeed. They've created huge backlogs, increased fees, politicized the citizenship test, made children and seniors pass language tests, and created new categories of citizenship rights. An NDP government will work with stakeholders to restore fairness and transparency to our citizenship and immigration system and to undo harmful Conservative changes. We will repeal Conservative legislation that treats naturalized and dual citizens differently from other citizens. We will review the citizenship test. And we will remove the requirement for 14-17 year olds and 55-64 year olds to pass a language test in order to receive citizenship.

GREEN: The dual citizenship bill must be repealed. Canada should never have become a two-tier citizenship country.

MARXIST-LENINIST: The MLPC stands for the establishment of objective criteria for the admission of individuals to Canada as immigrants and refugees. We are particularly opposed to the citizenship revocation provisions of the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act and stand for its repeal. Canada needs a new citizenship act which that eliminates all vestiges of privilege, affirms citizenship rights on an objective, non-racist basis, and provides the rights of residents and refugees with a guarantee. Freedom of conscience must not be violated under any circumstances.

Many immigrants to Canada face serious hurdles to family reunification, which negatively impacts their sense of belonging in the country. If elected, what steps if any, will you take to support local immigrants seeking to bring their families to Waterloo Region?

NDP: Family reunification is a priority for the NDP. Evidence shows that immigrants do better when they have the social support of family around them. Parents and grandparents can be an important source of moral and financial support, in addition to helping with domestic tasks like childcare. And reunification of children with parents is an internationally recognized human right.

But under Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, families are waiting longer and longer to be reunited – children and spouses are now waiting 2-3 years to be reunited, while parents and grandparents are waiting up to ten years. And that's when they can be reunited at all. The Conservatives have capped the number of parent and grandparent sponsorships and changed the rules to make family sponsorship a luxury out of the reach of many families. The NDP will work to make family reunification a priority for our immigration system. More details will be available in our platform.

GREEN: Local immigrants should be able to vouch for family members and take responsibility for them while being processed in a timely manner as a priority over those applying to immigrate with no pre-existing immigrants in their family, with the exception of life saving exigencies taking priority. Refugees over immigration is my position to save lives.