Immigration Partnership Newsletter

Waterloo EDC reports that Waterloo Region is one of the best places in the world for business to innovate and thrive, due in part to its cultural diversity. Almost 90% of businesses that participated in the Workforce Planning Board 2016 Employer One survey were hiring. This should create a promising outlook for immigrants seeking work here. And yet that is not the case for many newcomers. Last year we surveyed immigrants and refugees and asked about their biggest challenge in settling in Waterloo Region. Finding work was the number one response. Respondents spoke of having to re-establish lost career recognition, having their education recognized, needing to build their Canadian work experience and working survival jobs with low pay. At the Immigration Partnership, we are working with business, employers and employment services to find ways to help more employers hire and retain the wealth of newcomer talent in Waterloo Region.

This latest issue of our Newsletter focuses on immigrant employment. It features local employers hiring immigrants. It discusses the value and skills immigrant jobseekers offer employers. It profiles programs and services that connect and support employers and immigrant jobseekers. It shares the ways in which this community has collaborated to bridge immigrant employment gaps for over 10 years, and illustrates there is still work to be done. This Newsletter also includes information about the people involved with the Immigration Partnership as well as work being done by our partners.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter and are inspired to reflect on how you and your work support the community integration of immigrants, refugees and other people in Waterloo Region.

Tara Bedard
Executive Director, Immigration Partnership
Immigrant Employment – A powerful benefit for both employers and immigrants

Ontario Drive & Gear – An employer perspective

Nicole Stefan, Ontario Drive & Gear

Founded in 1962, Ontario Drive & Gear Limited (ODG) has obtained an international reputation for top quality products. ODG operates from five facilities located in Ontario and Quebec with their main facility located locally in New Hamburg. It employs approximately 300 employees internationally.

To satisfy the growing demand for its products and innovative developments, ODG has aligned its business strength in two divisions: Gear and Vehicles. The Gear Division is an industry specialist in high mix, reduced volume, high quality manufacturing of gears and transmissions. The Vehicle Division is known as the world leader in producing amphibious vehicles with the ARGO. It is also leading the emergence of a new generation of unmanned robotically controlled extreme terrain mobility platforms.

ODG recognizes that its people are the basis of the company’s success and that internationally trained employees are a key component of their strength. ODG has deliberately reached out to find newcomers in Waterloo Region to fill important roles in the company. Their outreach has brought them valuable international talent which contributes to a strong work ethic and passion for success.

Nicole Stefan works in ODG Human Resources. She reflects, “Our relationship with local employment agencies and the Immigration Partnership has been instrumental in spreading the word to newcomers in the community about employment opportunities with Ontario Drive & Gear. They are part of our company’s success.”

For information about current career opportunities, contact: hr@odg.com.

Employers: Get free hiring support

These employment services can help employers hire newcomer talent.

Agilec
519-576-2681

Conestoga College Career Centre
519-885-0300 x5226

Lutherwood
Kitchener: 519-743-2460
Cambridge: 519-623-9380

The Working Centre
519-743-1151

Region of Waterloo Employment Services
519-883-2101 x5655

YMCA Employment Services
Kitchener: 519-579-9622
Cambridge: 519-621-1621

Other sources of immigrant talent:

Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre
519-745-2531

The following programs work exclusively with Internationally Trained Professionals.

Conestoga College Immigrant Internship Program
519-748-5220 x2587

YMCA Mentorship Program for Internationally Trained Professionals
Kitchener: 519-579-9622
Cambridge: 519-621-1621

For more information about hiring immigrants in Waterloo Region, go to: http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/hire
An Interview with Employment Services: The Challenges, Supports and Benefits of Newcomer Employment

Paulina Cisneros, K-W Multicultural Centre, and Lil-Marie Myers, YMCA Employment Services

We asked local employment service providers who have worked with thousands of immigrants to share some insights for employers and immigrants seeking work. Here’s what they said:

How do newcomers benefit the Canadian economy and employers? What do they bring that is unique?

- Newcomers bring diversified, international experience and a fresh perspective to Canadian companies. For organizations that do business overseas, their diverse cultural and business knowledge is a particular advantage.
- Many newcomers – and especially economic immigrants to Canada – are very well educated and arrive with extensive experience in their fields that Canadian employers can benefit from.
- Newcomers typically speak at least two languages. This allows them to serve a broader client base. They are hard working, motivated, and ready to take initiative – qualities that help them perform well and benefit employers.

What are the top barriers experienced by newcomers in finding employment?

- Some of the unique barriers to finding employment include English language proficiency, their “soft skills”, their understanding of Canadian workplace culture and practical knowledge of the job search process in Canada. For example, some newcomers do not realize that they likely need to apply to multiple jobs in order to secure employment.
- Newcomers often do not have the personal and professional networks to find employment opportunities.
- Work experience obtained overseas may not be seen as sufficient for employment in Canada. This can lead to newcomers having too much experience for entry level work and not enough Canadian work experience for higher level positions.
- Credentials obtained outside Canada may not be recognized. Transferring credentials can be a lengthy and expensive process, potentially requiring significant additional training or post-secondary education.

What most helps newcomers to find employment?

- Job search skills workshops and programs that include Canadian workplace culture and professional skills are very useful.
- Networking is an extremely important part of the job search process in Canada.
- Spending time with employment service providers is critical to go through resources and information about career path, goal setting, differences in hiring processes and legislation related to career and employment in Canada. Conducting information interviews helps employment service providers to get to know more about a newcomer’s work experience and job fields and newcomers are able to get a better, more realistic understanding of their field or occupation in the Canadian context.
- It is useful for newcomers to be willing to work in entry level positions and recognize that skills and information learned in those types of positions are valuable and can be transferred and applied to other jobs at other levels.
Newcomers Hone Skills at the 9th Global Skills Conference

Brittney Emslie, K-W Multicultural Centre

The Global Skills Conference (GSC) takes place every spring in Waterloo Region. This free, one-day conference brings together over 150 Internationally-Trained Professionals (ITPs) and connects them with employers and agencies to help them obtain resources and information on credential recognition, hiring processes, related professions, regulatory bodies and more. GSC provides ITPs the opportunity to enhance their skills, network and learn about resources to help search for work in their field or in related professions.

Participants are provided networking skills training and participate in a networking event with local employers at the end of the day. These opportunities result in gaining more professional contacts in their field, interviews and job opportunities.

The theme of April’s 9th Annual GSC was “Leveraging Your Skills”. Throughout the years many success stories have come from the Global Skills Conference, and this year’s conference featured several previous participants who since succeeded in securing great jobs in Waterloo Region.

The GSC is truly a community undertaking. It is hosted by the K-W Multicultural Centre. The Global Skills Conference Advisory Committee adds the expertise of many local partners to planning the event, including Immigration Partnership, The Working Centre, Lutherwood, YMCA, Region of Waterloo, Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin, Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington, Conestoga College, Agilec and Waterloo Region Small Business Centre. It is supported by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Mark your calendar! The next GSC will take place on March 21, 2018. For updates visit: www.globalskillsconference.com.
Looking Back on a Decade of Newcomer Employment Work

Nora Whittington, Immigration Partnership

It has been over 11 years since the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) was launched and hosted by the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce. In 2010, the work of WRIEN was integrated into the newly created Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership (IP), which is hosted by the Region of Waterloo. In 2011, Ian McLean, CEO of the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, became Chair of IP’s Work Steering Group, allowing the history and hard work of WRIEN to continue forward.

It has been quite a journey over these years. There has been enormous commitment from partner agencies and employment programs including the Employment Ontario Employment Service agencies, the Mentorship Program, Internship Program, the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington and Dufferin, employers across the region, community members and so on. It hasn’t always been easy but the passion has never waned.

The focus has been on bridging the gap between immigrant jobseekers and employers. We work to accomplish this by building awareness, acting as a resource and providing opportunities for networking and education. Early on, some partners had never met at the same table or worked together as closely as they do now. IP has provided a way for partners to collaborate on initiatives and projects that ultimately help build the bridge.

IP does not compete with programs that exist in the community. We do not deliver a service. We are here to help build and increase partnerships that will support and enhance the work delivered by service providers. IP’s Work Pillar consists of employers, employment service partners and others that have a vested interested in valuing the talent of immigrant jobseekers and the employers who are in need of talent to sustain and build their businesses/organizations.

We have seen numerous relationships developed, networking and educational events delivered, marketing materials developed, task groups created and many new employers engaged. We have representation on various committees and steering groups in the community and have enjoyed a growing relationship with the Workforce Planning Board and the Chambers of Commerce. More employers are reaching out to IP to help promote job postings through our networks. There has been significant growth and change over the last 11 years.

We never stop looking for ways to make the bridge longer and stronger. Right now we have a task group meeting to develop an employer marketing campaign. We know that there is a talent shortage in Waterloo Region and that immigrant jobseekers are very keen to find meaningful work. It is building the connection between the two that is the ongoing mission of IP’s Work Pillar.

To learn more about our work, contact Nora Whittington: nwhittington@regionofwaterloo.ca
Newcomer Programs in Waterloo Region

The Working Centre Newcomer Employment Programs

Stephanie Mancini, The Working Centre

The Working Centre, with support from the Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and United Way Waterloo Region Communities, has been adapting our Employment Services supports to accommodate a growing group of New Canadians – those with low English skills and/or little work experience.

Typically, we help people to build their tools and then conduct an independent job search. However, with this group of newcomers, many are less able to job search independently. Over the past year we have worked strategically to do the following:

• Navigate relationship-based support with the help of Transition Assistants who speak either Arabic or Amharic, working in a collaboration between the job searcher and the employment counsellor.
• Build the newcomer’s awareness of the labour market, and health and safety issues in Ontario. Not through workshops, as this group does not typically participate in classroom based activities – but through workplace tours and job trials.
• We added our Employer Liaison workers into this mix. They work to understand the job readiness and goals of each participant and then market/match them to potential employers – either for a direct hire or for a supported work placement.
• Support employers to integrate workers with low language skills. We have added a Job Coaching role (in either English/Arabic or English/Amharic) that assists the employer with the initial interview, orientation for the worker during the first day or two of work, a health and safety orientation, building an English vocabulary list to help the worker function in the workplace and establishing a mentor in the workplace. We have gone back to employers a month or two later to help with training on a new piece of equipment.

Of these, 105 are employed, 34 have returned to English language training to find better jobs, 20 have been connected with youth programs or returned to high school, and with the rest we continue to strategize about potential next steps.

We are working to build this enhanced model into our Employment Service work in a more strategic way and working through how to continue this support without additional funding. As Canada continues to respond to the global issues of refugees who need to leave their home countries, we continue to ask how we can we find creative ways to support people in getting into work that supports their families. Our learning will continue.

Employers can access the talent through this program by contacting: employers@theworkingcentre.org.
Change a Life over Lunch: K-W Multicultural Centre Connector Program

Keith Summers, WR Connector Program

The WR Connector program returned to Waterloo Region in October after a successful pilot in 2015. This great program helps local businesses find talent from a select pool of highly-qualified New Canadians.

The program is a joint-venture between the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce and the K-W Multicultural Centre. It is modeled on similar programs in Vancouver, Halifax, Calgary and Edmonton.

Funded in part by the Government of Canada, WR Connector works with New Canadians that have professional qualifications and are either citizens or permanent residents, and introduces them to local business people and professionals through local “connectors”.

Connectors are entrepreneurs, professionals and business people in Waterloo Region. They each meet with a professionally-qualified New Canadian (connectee) and refer them to three other people in their professional networks. The connectee is launched onto a fast-track for networking, connections, employment and investment opportunities.

“We have seen, time and time again, that connecting people is the best way to help newcomers succeed in Waterloo Region,” said Lucia Harrison, CEO of the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre. “Connecting New Canadians with their professional peers in Waterloo Region just makes sense.”

To get involved as a connector or connectee, contact: Dave Thomas, Connector Manager at: dave@wrconnectors.com or 519-505-2343.

Tips for Newcomers Looking for Employment

• Attend employment-related workshops, conferences, networking events and job fairs
• Join business associations, sector related groups and service clubs, e.g. Rotary, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
• Participate in blogs and groups in your field
• Network on LinkedIn and other social platforms
• Network in the community by attending as many events as possible
• Volunteer your talents within the community
• Work on your communication skills
Sheila McIntosh has been involved in Immigration Partnership’s Work Pillar since its inception in 2009 and was part of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network before that. In that time she has seen many changes and shifts in the community.

As a Supervisor of Talent Management at the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, she has been involved in the human resources field for more than 15 years. She has seen markets where employers need to compete for a limited pool of workers as well as markets where there is a keen need for jobseekers to compete for a limited supply of jobs. This has meant diverse strategies are needed in encouraging newcomer employment.

“Early in my career I saw many newcomers with great skills that didn’t do well in an interview,” she relates. “I came to have a desire to understand what our barriers are and what can we do to break those down – not just at the Region and with other employers but also seeing a key role for agencies that support newcomers.”

Sheila sees it as critical for newcomers to develop soft skills in the Canadian context that help them to secure employment. Immigrant jobseekers often have the technical skills needed for a job but they may still need to learn more about how to communicate in a Canadian context, how to give and receive constructive feedback and understand social norms in a work setting. She also sees the other side, too, where it is important for employers to ensure that they have a diverse, globally-aware workforce as a long term business strategy.

A look back at local newcomer employment work over several years shows that some shifts happen more slowly than we may like. Sheila reflects that while we have done good work, “we still have a lot more to do when it comes to newcomer employment.”

Sheila is passionate about how work is a critical piece of settling and belonging for newcomers. Work helps newcomers learn English, earn income so they can engage more fully in their new country, know they have something to give, build a community of friends and feel like they belong: “People can get so much fulfillment from the work that they do,” she says, “and I’m proud to be part of making that happen for newcomers in our community.”
Marilena Benak, Work Steering Group member

Marilena Benak felt enthusiasm and hope when the Immigration Partnership began to form and define the Work Steering Group (WSG) with a dedication to the integration of immigrants into the local workforce. She joined the group almost immediately as Mentorship Coordinator on behalf of the YMCAs of Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo. She now represents The Literacy Group of Waterloo Region and plans on continuing to contribute to the mandate and scope of Immigration Partnership.

Marilena shares that it has been an exciting journey as members of WSG brainstorm, come up with innovative ideas and implement them to benefit immigrants in Waterloo Region. She finds the aim of erasing barriers to employment for New Canadians through awareness raising, engaging employers and facilitating mindful actions to be the most thrilling “ride” for WSG members. “I’d like to thank the leaders of this group for being great listeners, being open to new ideas, for their fairness in judgment and for their quick actions.”

Marilena has participated in multiple subcommittees and projects initiated by WSG, and many events. She is proud of the outcomes that benefit immigrants in their pursuit of Canadian work which matches their professional experience. “I believe that Immigration Partnership is deeply embedding its roots in our community and is providing high level advocacy to enhance the well-being of our citizens.”

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Immigration Partnership Updates

Settle

The Settle Steering Group (SSG) is focusing on a number of key areas to improve settlement for newcomers. In the area of interpretation, K-W Multicultural Centre and Access Alliance from Toronto hosted two workshops – one about interpreter ethics for volunteers providing informal interpretation supports for newcomers and one for service providers about how to work with trained interpreters. Housing is also a key need and partners have been working on the housing options for an increasing number of refugee claimants in Waterloo Region and other newcomers. Now in its second year, the Newcomer Landlord Award recognizes landlords that go above and beyond to provide affordable housing solutions for recent immigrants and refugees. The award will be presented at the National Housing Day celebration on November 16th. The SSG also initiated a regular meeting of Executive Directors from local settlement organizations to help facilitate regular communication and collaboration.

Staff and partners participated in a variety of consultations and discussions, including a Housing Roundtable about the federal housing strategy, a Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network consultation on health needs of newcomers and Waterloo Region Oral Health Coalition discussions. When Legal Aid Ontario announced in May that it planned to cut funding to its Immigration and Refugee Law Services due to budget deficits, the SSG and IP Council advocated with area MPs, MPPs and municipalities for sustainable funding for this program which benefits many newcomers in Waterloo Region. As a result of IP and other advocacy, service cuts were placed on hold.

Work

Over the past months, the Work Steering Group’s (WSG) Planning Action Group has been re-envisioning the organization of the Pillar and developing great ideas to focus on over the next year. A big thank you to Sheila McIntosh, Roberto Villamar, Gayle Horyn, Tim Callan and Carol Simpson for dedicating time and passion to this.

WSG kicked off a busy autumn in partnership with the Workforce Planning Board, Reception House and K-W Multicultural Centre to deliver a networking training session for Syrian newcomers at the September Transportation and Logistics Job Expo. Around 40 Syrians were then able to network with many employers at the Expo. Next up, WSG partnered with the Workforce Planning Board on Manufacturing Day in October to create a non-traditional networking opportunity for newcomers where busses brought immigrant jobseekers to visit manufacturers and connect with these employers. Later that month, WSG partnered on the Chamber of Commerce Business Expo to present networking training for newcomers, provide opportunity for participants to network with local employers and promote the hiring of newcomers. Partners were also at several Chamber of Commerce “Business After 5” events promoting employment service programs and hiring immigrants.

Coming up, WSG will begin planning an employer marketing campaign about hiring immigrants, and employer outreach will start for the Global Skills networking event in March 2018. December will bring a Chamber of Commerce/Immigration Partnership “Point of View” event featuring Jim Estill, President/CEO of Danby, who will share with local employers how he supports newcomers in business and in his community. This is a presentation not to be missed!
**Belong**

Over the summer, the Belong Steering Group (BSG) hosted two leader orientation sessions for the Kitchen Table Conversation for Action on Inclusion project. The project is led by the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC) and ONESTEP (Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects). More than 20 people in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge participated in this training and the BSG is now organizing a coordinated approach to facilitating intentional conversations about inclusion in Waterloo Region. We are also happy to report that Immigration Partnership and several BSG members are taking part in the Building Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Leadership program offered by the Peel Regional Diversity Roundtable.

**Partnership-wide**

In September, Immigration Partnership, the Centre for Community Based Research and the International Migration Research Centre hosted the Waterloo Region Faith, Settlement & Syrian Resettlement Research Forum. Researchers from six local studies on immigration and refugee resettlement presented their findings to around 80 community leaders, partners and other stakeholders. The forum provided a great opportunity to reflect on how our community responded to the welcoming of almost 2,000 Syrian refugees in 2015/2016 and to discuss how what we learned can improve how we welcome all newcomers as a community in the future.

Immigration Partnership’s Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) engaged partners in evaluating the process of creating the Community Action Plan 2017-2019 (CAP) and developed a Performance Measurement Framework for the CAP to guide the measurement and understanding of progress and results of CAP implementation and to improve decision making. The EAC is working on a community survey which will be circulated in coming months to develop a better understanding of how the work of community partners through Immigration Partnership is impacting the lives of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region.

Immigration Partnership also launched the enhanced Immigration Waterloo Region website as a tool for helping immigrants and refugees navigate life locally. The website continues to be promoted with partners and on social media, and a community calendar serves as a key source of information and upcoming events for newcomers, community agencies, employers and interested individuals. Check out the site and sign up for updates: [www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca)!
Community Events and Updates

Refugee Settlement Conversation
Explore the needs and issues faced by refugees and understand their contributions to our community. This event is facilitated by Reception House Waterloo Region. For more information visit: http://ideaexchange.org/programs/event/refugee-settlement-conversation
When: Wednesday, November 15, 6:30-8:00 pm
Where: Idea Exchange, Queen’s Square, Cambridge

Money Matters for Newcomers and New Canadians
Money Matters is a free financial literacy program for new immigrants and refugees. It is a 2-day course taught by trained volunteers. Learn about budgeting, banking basics, credit and borrowing, RESPs and other ways to save. Arabic translation is available. Registration is required for both sessions. Register at kpl.org or call 519-743-0271 x230.
When: Thursdays, November 16 and 23, 6:30-8:30 pm
Where: Kitchener Public Library, Central Library, 85 Queen Street North

Technology Help for Arabic Speakers
Trained volunteers from University of Waterloo’s EnTECH will provide 1-on-1 technology assistance on topics like setting up an email address, using Google Maps and Google Translate, and more. Technology-related activities for children will be available. Registration required. Contact Omaima: omaima@kwmc-on.com or 519-505-2497.
When: Saturday, November 18, 1:00-4:00 pm
Where: Kitchener Public Library, Central Library, 85 Queen Street North

English Conversation Circles at Public Libraries
Practice English conversation skills and discuss a variety of topics with others who are new to Canada. These free drop-in programs are a great way to improve your English and meet new people. No registration required.

Idea Exchange Cambridge Library Locations

| Tuesdays | Central Library, 85 Queen Street North
| Wednesdays | Idea Exchange, Clemens Mills, 50 Saginaw Parkway, Cambridge
| Thursdays | Idea Exchange, Queen’s Square, 1 North Square, Cambridge
| Fridays | Idea Exchange, Preston, 435 King Street East, Cambridge

Kitchener Public Library Locations

| Mondays | Central Library, 85 Queen Street North
| Thrusdays | Central Library, 85 Queen Street (women only)
| Saturdays | Forest Heights Library, 251 Fischer-Hallman Road

Waterloo Public Library Locations

| Wednesdays | McCormick Branch, 500 Parkside Drive

See the Kitchener Public Library (www.kpl.org) or the Cambridge Idea Exchange (ideaexchange.org) websites for other conversation circles in your community.