



Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership Submission to Federal Pre-Budget Consultation 2025

Waterloo Region is one of Canada's fastest growing and economically significant communities, and it has one of the highest rates of immigration nationally. Encompassing the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and the townships of North Dumfries, Wilmot, Woolwich, and Wellesley, it has a rich history of immigration, with diverse communities contributing to its cultural fabric. In recent years, a growing number of immigrants have settled in the area, drawn by reputable educational institutions, a thriving tech sector, and a strong local economy. Nearly 30% of the regional population are immigrants. Immigration is transforming our region demographically, and it is essential to sustaining our economic growth. Almost all labour force growth is now driven by immigration. Newcomers are revitalizing neighbourhoods, strengthening local businesses, and enriching our community through their contributions to arts, culture, civic life, and philanthropy.

For almost 20 years, the Immigration Partnership has been an essential regional economic initiative involving over 70 immigrant and community service, government, post-secondary, business and ethno-cultural organizations working together to ensure Waterloo Region is an inclusive community where immigrants thrive and contribute to shared prosperity and growth.

Challenges are inherent in migrating to a new country, it is essential we work together as a regional community to help new immigrants overcome their challenges as quickly as possible. The top challenges of newcomers in Waterloo Region include: 1. Cost of living; 2. Finding affordable housing; 3. Finding work; 3. Finding health care; and 5. Making friends and social connections. As immigration continues, investment in essential community infrastructure like housing, health care and more has not kept pace to ensure that newcomers and others living in communities are able to live a good life.

Our [2025-2028 Strategic for Building Community through Immigration](#) sets out key community strategies for change to improve immigration experiences and outcomes.

To address community priorities and maximize the community benefits of immigration, our community requires the following investments in the next federal budget:

1. A stable, sustainable immigration system with a 50-year levels plan that is aligned to infrastructure and labour force plans. The will allow municipalities to plan effectively for growth and develop the needed infrastructure.

2. An annual additional investment of \$250,000 to the Regional Municipality of Waterloo for our Immigration Partnership to maintain regional efforts to support immigration following a 30% federal funding reduction for the 2025-2028 period, which poses immediate risk to our region's ability to attract, retain, and support the immigrants shaping our collective future as we grow to 1 million residents.
3. Targeted investment in regionally-operating employment and skills development programs for immigrants that ease transition to skills-aligned roles or upskill for new careers, including: an additional \$125,000 annually in the Workplace Immigrant Network and Global Skills Conference, \$250,000 annually for the Waterloo Region Immigrant Work Experience Program.
4. Significant investment in affordable and lower income housing, transitional housing, community housing, housing subsidies and the associated infrastructure.
5. Significant investment in health care infrastructure, services and personnel, including:
 - a. National mobility of internationally trained health (and other regulated) professionals approved for practice in other provinces and expedited credentialing in Ontario;
 - b. Earmarked funds within provincial health transfers for language interpretation in medical settings (\$400,000 annually for Waterloo Region) and dedicated refugee health clinics in resettlement communities;¹ and
 - c. Incentives for all family physicians to take on refugee and other newcomer patients.
6. A 25% increase in settlement funding and Language Instruction for Newcomers in Canada (LINC) program investments in Waterloo Region, and re-funding of LINC levels 6-8 to enable immigrants to meet employer standards for employment.

On behalf of the Immigration Partnership:

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