

**WATERLOO REGION
LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL (LIPC)**

FINAL REPORT

(April 2010)

LIPC Lead Community Partners



LIPC Funder



**Citizenship and
Immigration Canada**

**Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada**

WATERLOO REGION LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This report is the culmination of over one year of collaboration across many sectors within Waterloo Region. It began with the Immigrant Settlement Support Group (ISWG), a standing committee of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) asking other organizations to collaborate in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP) from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Ontario Ministry Of Citizenship.

The purpose of this initiative was:

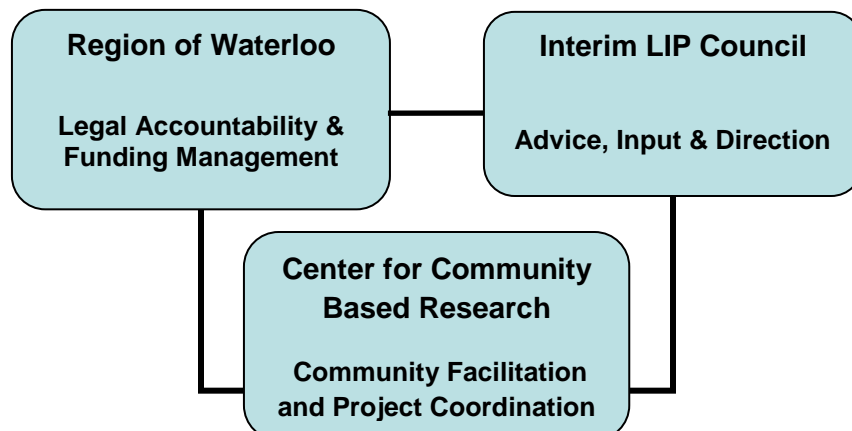
to enhance existing partnerships to establish a comprehensive Local Immigration Partnership and develop a collaborative strategy that includes solutions for successful settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region.

The lead organizations on this Phase 1 proposal were:

Regional Municipality of Waterloo as the lead applicant with overall accountability for the LIP project and for any funds received.

Immigrant Support Working Group (ISWG) of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) consisting of all of the CIC and the provincial Ministry of Citizenship (MIC) funded settlement and immigrant service providers in the Region. Expanded, this group became the Interim Local Immigration Partnership Council (LIPC).

Centre for Community Based Research, an independent, non-profit organization, as the facilitator of all aspects of the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Phase 1 project.



After the LIP proposal was accepted for funding by CIC, over 200 people contributed to the project throughout the year (beginning officially in March 2009). The results reflected in this report could not have been achieved without their intensive contribution.

The purpose of this report is to share the results of the LIPC's work. Those results include a Settlement/Integration Strategy and Action Plan for Phase 2 (please see Chapter 2 of this report) and a proposed structure that will continue the collaborative nature of the LIPC (please see Chapter 3 of this report).

BACKGROUND: WELCOMING NEWCOMERS – A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Waterloo Region is a community that has always welcomed and benefited from immigration. Presently, 22.3% of Waterloo Region residents are immigrants or refugees from diverse regions of the world, with expected growth to 30% by 2031. Our region is one of the top seven communities in Canada for recent immigrants/refugees¹ on a per capita basis (2006 Census)

The challenges and barriers faced by our newest citizens are varied and complex including:

- understanding various Canadian systems (health, education, justice, social services, etc.);
- accessing needed services;
- finding employment in their field and getting their foreign credentials recognized;
- learning a new language;
- learning how to integrate with local cultures and how to adapt family or personal ways with a new environment;
- facing discrimination.

There have been initiatives throughout Waterloo Region over the past several years to develop strategies to address these challenges and systemic barriers faced by new immigrants. For example, the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN), currently in its fifth year of operation, has facilitated the creation of several programs to assist with immigrant employment. However, there is still much to be done in order to develop a comprehensive and strategic approach to settlement and integration for our community. It is planned that, through the LIP process, existing partnerships will be expanded to do that.

PURPOSE OF THE LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP (LIP)

The purpose of this initiative is to enhance existing partnerships to establish a comprehensive Local Immigration Partnership. Through the coordination and work of this partnership, a collaborative strategy that includes solutions for successful settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region has been developed.

¹ While the term “immigrant” is often used to describe all people coming to Canada from other countries, in this report we will refer to immigrants as those who come to Canada after being approved as permanent residents, having either passed Canada’s point system as an independent economic applicant or having been sponsored by close family members. Refugees may be government assisted or sponsored by other groups in Canada, or may be claimants who arrive here and apply for protection.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF PHASE 1

Establishing a Local Immigration Partnership Council and developing a comprehensive and strategic approach to settlement and integration will deliver significant benefits to Waterloo Region. The first phase had two goals:

1. To develop a comprehensive Local Immigration Partnership Council.

One primary goal of this initiative has been to develop a comprehensive Local Immigration Partnership Council. This would include:

- I. To develop a structure for the LIPC including terms of reference.
- II. To identify future roles and responsibilities of the LIPC.
- III. To determine the membership of the LIPC.

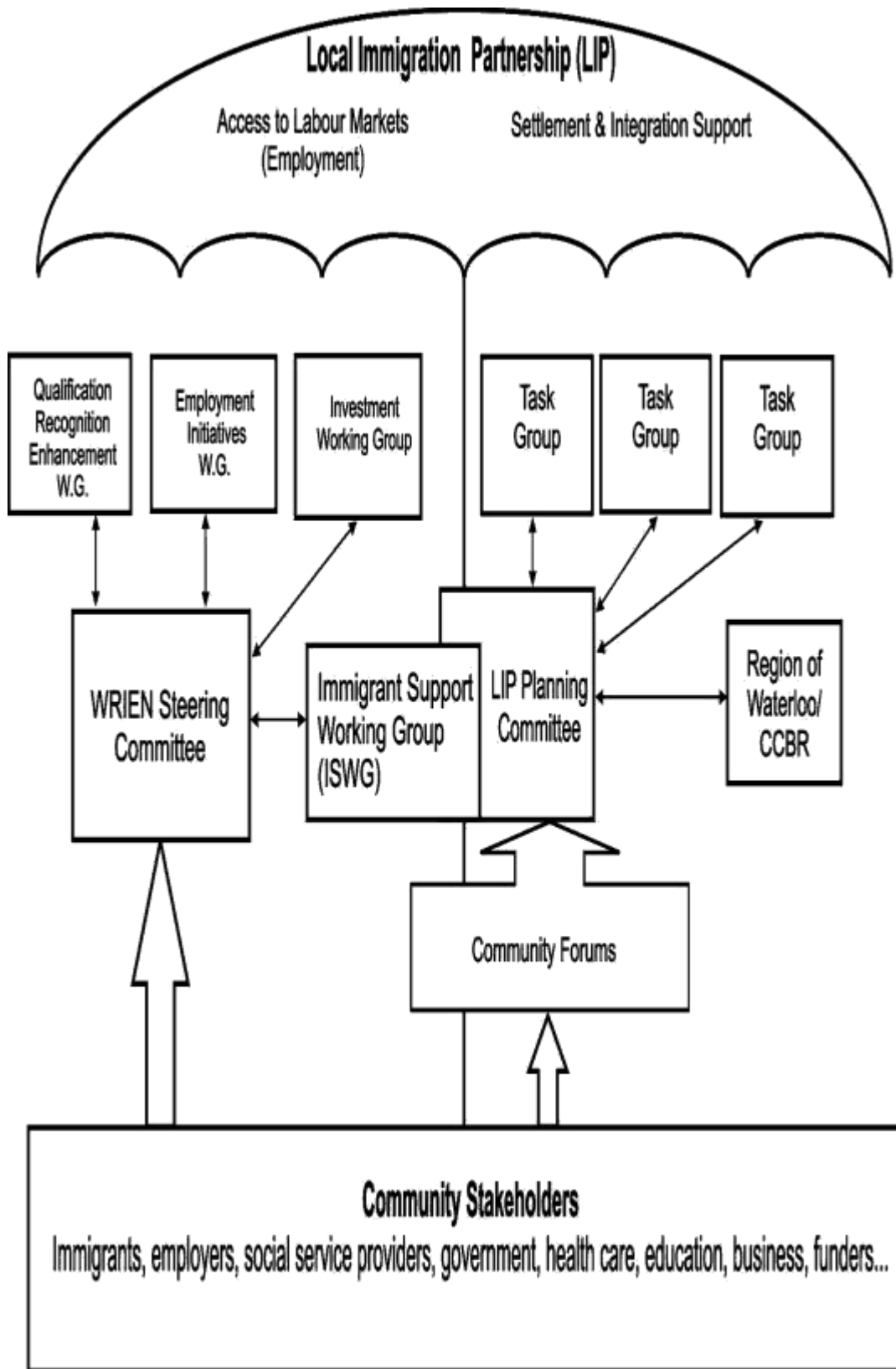
It was envisioned that the Partnership would be, and indeed for the most part was a dynamic collaboration of community stakeholders from many sectors, including the immigrant service provider community, business sector, youth, employment, community based organizations, health, governments and educational institutions.

2. To develop a comprehensive and collaborative settlement and integration strategy.

This strategy is part of planning for future growth in Waterloo Region, but it is also about creating a welcoming and sustainable community. It was envisioned that this strategy would address three objectives:

- A. Improve access to and coordination of effective, strategic and comprehensive services/programs that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration
- B. To improve access to the labour market for immigrants.
- C. To strengthen awareness and the capacity of Waterloo Region to integrate increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees.

Given that a local immigration partnership on labour market access already exists in the region (WRIEN - Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network), the emphasis of Phase One has been on objectives A and C under Goal #2 above. WRIEN is ENTERING THE 5TH year of its mandate and is in the process of identifying future directions for the network. The evaluation of future roles for WRIEN has been integrated with, and has provided input into, the Local Immigration Partnership planning, parallel to the development of the collaborative settlement and integration strategy (see diagram below, which represents the parallel planning process between WRIEN and LIPC). The outcome or product of this process has been a comprehensive immigration strategy that addresses immigrant settlement, employment and integration.



PHASE 1 PROCESS – ENSURING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Phase one activities of the LIP included expanding cross-sector community involvement in ongoing consultations with and feedback from a variety of community stakeholders. This involvement was undertaken through:

- Establishing an Interim LIP Council through expansion of the Immigrant Support Working Group of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network, to guide the work of this planning phase;
- Holding two community strategy sessions to explore major thematic areas needing attention in order to become a more welcoming community for immigrants and refugees. Those themes determined the Task Group structure for Phase 1 of the LIP process;
- Involving all sectors in a variety of immigrant settlement and integration Task Groups to explore the issues and gaps and develop Strategic Directions and Action Strategies to be implemented in Phase 2;
- Ensuring key sector involvement through specific focus groups with immigrants, refugees and employers;
- Evaluating the one year development process and outcomes;
- Seeking local commitment to Phase Two and beyond through a broad based Community Forum where participants received a copy of the draft report and had an opportunity to respond to the overall direction and structure of the future LIP Council.

The process and results of each of these activities is outlined in this report.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY SESSIONS - PROCESS AND RESULTS

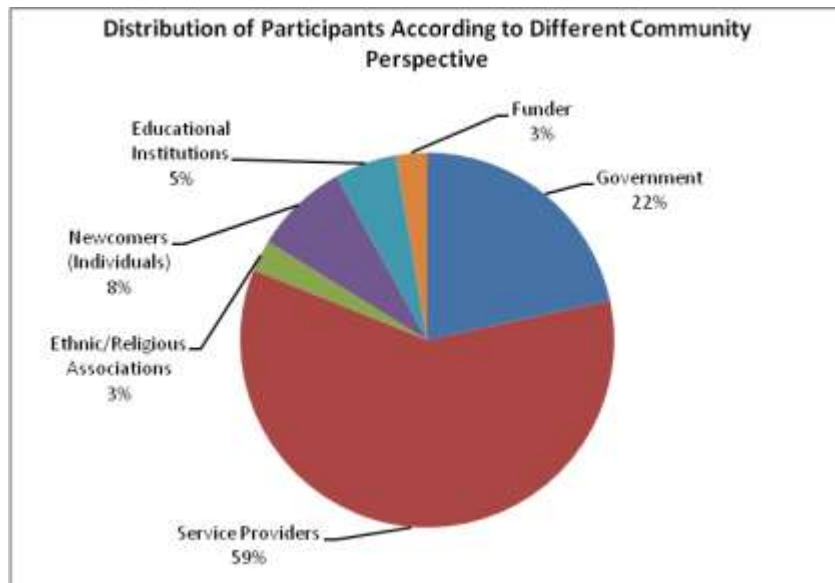
There were many ways for organizations and citizens to get involved in the identification of the issues and solutions related to coordinated immigrant and refugee settlement and integration throughout Phase 1. They included **community strategy sessions, thematic and structure task groups, focus groups** and a final **community forum**.

Process for Community Strategy Sessions

Two community strategy sessions were held (April 14 & May 14 2009) with the purpose of:

- Exploring issues, gaps and opportunities related to immigrant and refugee settlement and integration,
- Based on this exploration, identifying 4-5 theme areas that task groups would explore in more detail.

The first session, held in Waterloo, consisted of 44 participants from a variety of sectors as noted in the chart below:



After an introduction by Mike Murray, CAO for the Region of Waterloo, participants were asked to place themselves physically along one wall on a continuum from Very Much to Not at All in answer to the question: *To what extent are the needs of recent immigrants/refugees being met in our community?* Participants generally placed themselves from near the middle of the continuum toward the end Not at All, indicating in discussion that while progress had been made there was still a long way to go for this community to be satisfactorily meeting the settlement needs of recent immigrants and refugees. Participants noted particularly needs related to information, mental health, language and the unique needs of refugees.

In answer to the second question - *To what extent are immigrants/refugees integrated in all aspects of our community?* - participants moved much more toward the “Not at All” end of the continuum. Most agreed with one participant who said: *Basic needs are met; people are getting help to be economically involved but not socio-culturally and politically.*

Participants then spent time in small groups discussing the question: *how do we as a Region move toward the positive end of the continuums for both settlement and integration?*

Results of Community Strategy Sessions

The full results of the two Community Strategy Sessions, summarized below, can be found in the full report *LIPC Community Strategy Sessions Report* on the CCBR website at: <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/LIP.html>.

At the end of the first session, participants were asked to determine the top five priority issues that LIPC should focus on to work towards successful settlement and integration of immigrants/refugees. The five areas were identified as:

:

1. Gaps in settlement services (language, health, housing and education)
2. Comprehensive service provision
3. Civic participation and immigrant leadership
4. Public awareness and acceptance
5. LIPC structure (including relationship to WRIEN).

In the second Community Strategy Session, held in Cambridge on May 14, 2009, 34 people participated with sector distribution very similar to the distribution in the first session. Participants honed the names and definitions of the five theme areas and their respective Task Groups. Following extensive discussion on each area, participants were then encouraged to sign up for one or more Task Groups and to suggest other names or sector representation for each.

THEMATIC TASK GROUPS - PROCESS AND RESULTS

Process for Task Groups

Five thematic task groups were formed, with four based on the settlement and integration themes identified in the Community Strategy Sessions and one based on the need to determine the future structure of LIPC. At the request of WRIEN, a sixth Task Group was added to explore employment needs with the possibility of WRIEN expanding its role to address the employment needs of all immigrants, beyond those of the professionally trained. All Task Groups were open to anyone who wished to participate.

Each Task Group met three times (a total of 18 meetings each 1.5 to 2 hours), identifying needs and gaps within their respective thematic areas, setting priorities for action and developing Strategic Directions and Action Strategies around two or three of their top priorities. The Task Groups and their thematic descriptions are outlined on the next page.

TASK GROUPS AND THEIR DESCRIPTION

LIPC

Structure

- Partnership Structure and operation (hosting, staffing, sustainable funding, advocacy)
- Relationship to WRIEN

Employment

(WRIEN)

- WRIEN is a local partnership presently addressing skilled immigrants' employment needs
- Explore employment issues for all immigrants/refugees

**Immigrant
Leadership &
Civic
Participation**

- Fostering immigrant/refugee leadership opportunities
- Meaningful involvement of immigrants/refugees in civic responsibilities
- Social inclusion of immigrants/refugees (including gender dimension)
- Mentoring opportunities for immigrants/refugees
- Building capacity; more access for immigrant/ refugee groups
- Awareness of Canadian social norms and values

**Public
Awareness &
Inclusion**

- Building positive attitudes and behaviour towards immigrants/refugees
- Fostering change within media, education system and other institutions as well as within newcomer groups themselves
- Developing appreciation for cultural diversity among the general public
- Building strategies to stop racism and discriminatory practices

**Comprehensive
Service
Provision**

- Coordinated, collaborated, and integrated services (inclusive of all human services)
- Facilitating immigrant/refugee access to and input into service provision
- Creating a "no wrong door" strategy for accessing services
- Research an integral part of creating an effective comprehensive system (i.e. needs/resource assessment, program evaluation)

**Enhancement
of Settlement
Services**

- Assessing the current settlement services and identifying gaps
- Strategies for better addressing immediate pressing settlement needs (including advocacy for individual and collective settlement needs)
- Creating ideas for filling the gaps in settlement services
- Current priorities are language, interpretation/ translation services, health, housing education, and employment preparation (priorities may change over time)

Results from Task Groups

The combined notes for the three meetings of each of the Task Groups can be found at: <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/LIP.html> under “Task Group Combined Reports”.

Each of the **five thematic Task Groups** developed strategic directions and action strategies based on two or three priority needs/gaps which they chose through a ranking process of all of the needs and gaps they had identified in their first meeting. While Task Group participants agreed that all of the identified needs/gaps are important to some degree, they felt that those identified as priorities should be the first ones that the LIPC should begin to work on in Phase 2. The LIPC should also review the notes from the related Task Group meetings for suggestions for addressing needs and gaps identified in the first meetings.

The charts in Chapter 2 of this Report entitled *Settlement/Integration Strategy and Action Plan* outline the Strategic Directions and Action Strategies recommended by the five Task Groups. In Phase 2, the LIP Council will need to review the Strategic Directions and Action Strategies and then determine, in conjunction with their three Working Groups, which Strategies they will begin to address. At that point they will be able to develop specific timeframes for action on those they choose to address immediately and to flesh out specific objectives and performance measures (both of those are already embedded in many of the Action Strategies) and an evaluation plan.

The **sixth LIP Task Group** focused on the future **structure of the LIP Council**. In the first meeting, participants, representing multiple sectors of the community, agreed that whatever structure emerged:

- LIP must be based on a shared vision, goals and values;
- it must have commitment from all levels of government and the community to be able to sustain itself financially;
- it must be action oriented;
- it must have community-wide representation with stakeholders committed to collaboration, accountability and responsibility.

Participants then went on to define various elements of the structure. For the second meeting the facilitators presented alternative models which were based on the various element descriptions that came out of discussions in the first meeting. The models and those elements were extensively honed during the second and third meetings, with additional input from the WRIEN Steering Committee, which met with facilitators to respond to the models presented. The final draft model was endorsed by the Task Group and by the WRIEN Steering Committee. The model and its various elements were presented to the Community Forum held on March 24, 2010. A diagram of the model and a description of its various components can be found in Chapter 3 of this Report *Partnership Council Structure*.

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUPS

The Interim LIP Council expressed concerns around the number of immigrants and refugees participating in Task Groups. Although many service provider staff who are/were immigrants or refugees were participating, as well as other individual immigrants/refugees not affiliated with service agencies, it was felt that the work of the Task Groups could be enhanced through taking, wherever possible, their results to larger numbers of immigrants and refugees who were not attached to service providers. To that end, once the Task Groups had determined the needs and gaps in their respective theme areas, focus groups were

held with immigrants and refugees throughout Waterloo Region. Nine focus groups were held, with eight of them being presented with the results of one or more Task Groups' identification of gaps and needs in the areas they had focused on. One focus group with refugees only was asked a set of questions around their needs and experiences, which, it was felt, often differed from other immigrants. Where needed, interpreters were used to help facilitate discussion.

Similarly, although employers were represented in some of the Task Groups, members of the WRIEN Steering Committee felt that, particularly for the Employment Task Group, it would be good to hear from more employers. To that end, an employers' focus group was organized by WRIEN staff.

The results of these focus groups can be found in Chapter 7 of this Report entitled *Consultations*.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Immigrant Fact Sheets

Additional research in the process of completing Phase 1 of the LIP process in Waterloo Region included a series of fact sheets published by the Region of Waterloo as developed by their Public Health Department and the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo, Wellington and Dufferin. Those fact sheets describing the Waterloo Region's immigrant populations can be found in Chapter 4 of this Report *Immigrant Populations in Waterloo Region*.

Inventory of Settlement/Integration Services

In addition, LIP partnered with the Welcoming Communities Initiative, a five year CURA project, to engage researchers from the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University in developing an inventory of settlement and integration services in Waterloo Region. The report from that research can be found in Chapter 5 of this Report *Service Inventory*. This data should prove to be very useful as LIP moves into Phase 2, especially in conjunction with the Strategic Directions and Action Strategies outlined under *Enhancement of Settlement Services* and *Comprehensive Service Provision*.

English Language Training (ESL/ELT) Environmental Scan

A separate research piece was undertaken in the latter days of LIP Phase 1 by the Centre for Community Based Research. The purpose was to provide a comprehensive listing of existing ESL/ELT services and to identify gaps and barriers which hinder access for new Canadians to the English education which they require. This research is a need long identified by the WRIEN's ISWG and one confirmed through the identification of needs/gaps by the LIP Task Groups during PHASE 1. The results of this research are presented in Chapter 6 *ESL/ELT Scan*.

All of the above research should form an integral part of the planning process as the LIPC, in Phase 2, begins to finalize its implementation plans for the Settlement/Integration Strategy.