

Join the Conversation

A Community Feedback Workshop

For

Immigrants, Employers, Service Providers and

Community Members

Of

Leeds and Grenville

Hosted by: Leeds & Grenville Immigration Partnership

Final Report: May, 2015



**Prepared By:
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The Opportunity Group**



The most popular themes of discussion at the Community Feedback Event:



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Background

Through consultations with organizations and newcomers residing in and around Leeds and Grenville, the Leeds & Grenville Immigration Partnership (LIP) Strategy was developed in 2011. The LIP is guided by the work of one full time, and one part time staff member, and 17 community partner organizations that make up the Partnership Council (Appendix C). The purpose of the Strategy was to provide direction to the LIP and community organizations on how to attract, welcome and include newcomers in Leeds & Grenville communities. Six strategy goals were proposed in 2011 and have been updated and discussed on an ongoing basis since then. The February 25 event ('Join the Conversation') was an opportunity for immigrants, employers, service providers and community members to provide feedback on the progress to date, while suggesting action items to further satisfy the six strategy goals. Thirty-six participants (six newcomers, twenty-five community organizations/agencies) attended. With the guidance of a facilitator, participants were divided into small groups to discuss these points. The key document which enabled these discussions was the Strategy Update of February 2015, which provided participants with an update on the work completed to date for each of the six strategy goals.

Event Objectives

The event was guided by the following objectives.

- To validate assumptions.
- To review challenges of the process (mandate of LIP).
- To determine how this process contributes to sustainability.
- To build on the Strategy Update of February 2015.

Assumptions

Prior to discussing the Strategy Update of February 2015, the group reviewed assumptions that would be made throughout the day. Assumptions are defined as "beliefs, principles, and ideas we have about a program, the people involved and the way we think the program will operate." (Kusters, C.S.L. et al 2011. *Making evaluations matter: A practical guide for evaluators*. Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen, The Netherlands)

Known assumptions:

1. That LIP funding is guaranteed to March 31, 2016 but, the consideration of initiatives existing beyond this date was acceptable.
2. LIP staff are mandated to support community driven initiatives but cannot pay for or lead them.

Assumptions validated prior to event discussions:

1. Community coalitions are an effective way to address community issues.
2. Through collaborations, our partners will actively participate in program delivery; defined as community organizations beginning to lead immigration/newcomer related initiatives.
3. Funding will be adequate and available when needed.
4. Newcomers have diverse settlement needs and interests, and will participate in the community as they desire.

Group Discussions

Using the Strategy Update of February 2015, groups were tasked with answering a set of questions, to expand upon existing LIP initiatives and suggest ideas for new ones.

1. **What are the remaining gaps?** *(After examining the work achieved by the LIP and its' partners, between 2011 and 2014)*
2. **What are the actions needed to fill each gap?**
3. **Who will complete each action?**
4. **What are realistic timelines to complete these actions?** *(Can extend beyond March 2016)*
5. **What does success look like, and what measurements need to be obtained?**

A summary of the action items resulting from these discussions is shown in Appendix F: Action Items Resulting From 'Join the Conversation' Event Discussions.

Themes

The Community Feedback Event revealed common themes with both identified gaps and action items to address the existing gaps.

Lack of Awareness

A majority of participants indicated that "lack of awareness" is an issue in Leeds and Grenville. This included:

- Regional awareness of the Immigration Partnership.
- Newcomers being unaware of services and programs available in Leeds and Grenville.
- Service providers being unaware of newcomers, when they first arrive to Leeds and Grenville.
- Lack of awareness of the level of cultural diversity in Leeds and Grenville.

Barriers to Employment

Another common theme was ‘barriers to employment’ that are regularly faced by newcomers. Participants consistently suggested that the barriers include: lack of Canadian experience and recognition of credentials of foreign trained professionals. Interestingly enough, language was not highlighted as a barrier in the conversations although national research identifies this as an obstacle.

Participants spoke of both the lack of recognition for international trained professionals and the amount of time required to have credentials recognized. A broader discussion is needed with the Partnership Council to determine their role in addressing these issues.

Mentorship Programs

Developing mentoring relationships for both professional and social networks was identified as a way to address the existing gaps. Through mentorship programs, local business professionals can improve their cross-cultural leadership and management. Newcomer mentees become more effective in their job search and improve their job readiness through introductions to professional networks.

Mentoring relationships for social purposes can help newcomers feel more included in their chosen community and mentors can assist with orientation and help provide a sense of belonging.

Recommendations for LIP Council

The event discussions provided an excellent foundation upon which further action items and sustainability deliberations can take place. It is recommended that:

1. The LIP Council and Working Groups should convene to review and prioritize new action items (Appendix F).
2. The LIP Council and Working Groups should determine how each action item will be executed (who/what/when).
3. The LIP Council should examine the merits of developing a logic model, with the consideration of action item sustainability past March 2016.

Evaluation

The overall evaluation of the event was positive, with seven new community groups requesting to be added to the LIP newsletter list and ten requesting LIP presentations to their organizations. A small percentage of participants indicated that the dialogue felt too rushed and recommended allowing more time for table discussions at future events.

Appendices



February 25th, 2015

8:30am-noon

Employment and Education Centre
105 Strowger Blvd. Brockville

IMMIGRANTS: What is a welcoming community?

EMPLOYERS: Are you interested in the benefits of highly skilled and mobile employees?

SERVICE PROVIDERS: How can the community support you in providing services to immigrants?

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: How can you show that you value a growing, diverse and vibrant community?

Register to attend a FREE half day community feedback event.

Participate in a facilitated, interactive workshop that will enable Leeds & Grenville to continue to build welcoming communities and a thriving economy.

Light breakfast provided.

**LIMITED SEATING,
REGISTER TODAY!**

Please RSVP by:

February 13, 2015

Phone: 613-498-2111 ext. 261

Email: loretta@eecentre.com

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Community Feedback Event Agenda

Employment & Education Centre

105 Strowger Blvd. Brockville

February 25, 2015

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 8:30-9:00 | Registration and Breakfast |
| 9:00 - 9:30 | Welcome Presentation and Self Introductions (name, and do you identify most with being an immigrant, employer, service provider or community member?) |
| 9:30 - 9:45 | Overview and Objectives |
| 9:45-10:00 | Review Strategy Update |
| 10:00-10:45 | Group Work on strategies/objectives/goals |
| 10:45- 11:00 | Sharing group work |
| 11:00- 11:25 | Moving towards sustainability |
| 11:25-11:45 | Future planning |

Appendix C: LIP Partnership Council, 2014/15

Brockville & District Multicultural Council

Chinese & Canadian Heritage Cultural Association

City of Brockville, Economic Development

CSE Consulting

Employment & Education Centre

Francophone Immigration Support Network of East Ontario

Fulford Academy

KEYS Job Centre

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

St. Lawrence College

1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board

TR Leger Immigrant Services / TR Leger Services aux Immigrants

United Counties of Leeds & Grenville

Upper Canada Leger Centre

Volunteer Centre of St. Lawrence-Rideau

Appendix D: Participant List

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Amber Coville | Smiths Falls Local Immigration Partnership |
| Ann Weir | United Counties of Leeds & Grenville (Economic Development) |
| Art Saringan | Newcomer |
| Bill Buckler | Township of Augusta |
| Brandy Smith | Brockville Public Library |
| Beth Lambert | KEYS Job Centre |
| Bea Singh | LIP Council, Brockville & District Multicultural Council |
| Cor Schreurs | The Works/Newcomer |
| Claire Gunnewick | Township of Rideau Lakes |
| Danika Wentzel | Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit |
| Estrella Saringan | Newcomer |
| Esabella Yang | Leeds & Grenville International Students interest |
| Frank Kinsella | Community Member |
| Frank O’Hearn | LIP Council, 1000 Islands Workforce Development Board |
| Greg Francis | Brockville Police |
| Glenna Schaillee | St. Lawrence College |
| Harold Hess | LIP Council, Volunteer Centre of St. Lawrence Rideau |
| Jeannette Johnston | Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre |
| Julie Case | LIP Council, T.R. Leger Immigrant Services |
| Linda Chadwick | Brockville Public Library |
| Liz Huff | Township of Leeds & 1000 Islands |
| Monique van Someren | The Works/Newcomer |
| Maggie Kim | Newcomer |
| Meghan MacDonald | CSE Consulting |
| Matt Raby | LIP Council, Upper Canada Leger Centre |
| Madeleine Nerenburg | KEYS Job Centre |
| Marianne Paddle | United Counties Leeds & Grenville |
| Marilies Rettig | Community Member |
| Mary Jean McFall | Employer/Community Member |
| Nathan Bi | Newcomer |
| Peri Howlett | Community Member |
| Sue Watts | LIP Council, Employment & Education Centre |
| Trudy Kennell | OSLT College Liaison |
| Trish McNamara | LIP Council, KEYS Job Centre |
| Wendy Onstein | Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre |

Facilitator: Karen McDonald Hurley

LIP Staff: Melissa Francis and Loretta Corbeil

LIP Council Chair: Dave Paul, Economic Development City of Brockville

Local Media Coverage: Brockville Recorder and Times, snapd 1000 Islands

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|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| MID-WINTER FINAL CLEARANCE | SAVE UP TO 70% | STOREWIDE ON ALL WINTER FASHION | ALAN BROWNS BROCKVILLE |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|

NEWS LOCAL

'Be proud of who you are'



By Nick Gardiner, Recorder and Times
Thursday, February 26, 2015 10:25:55 EST AM



Gananoque's Frank O'Hearn, executive director of the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board, and recent Dutch arrival Monique Van Someren react to discussion during a workshop sponsored by the Leeds and Grenville Immigration Partnership Wednesday, February 25, 2015 in Brockville, Ont. Nick Gardiner/Brockville Recorder and Times/QMI Agency

It takes more than claiming the birthright of the Canadian flag or showing off Canada's oldest rail tunnel to attract immigrants to Brockville, says a recent newcomer to the area.

"That means nothing to immigrants. You've got to show pride, even arrogance, about the community. You can smell that," Cor Schreurs told The Recorder and Times during an immigration workshop Wednesday at the Employment and Education Centre. A Dutch entrepreneur who endured a four-year process that gave him second thoughts about locating to Canada before he finally

received a visa, Schreurs and his partner Monique Van Someren have launched a new arm for the family's event-planning business that has roots in the Netherlands.

Schreurs credits the efforts of Brockville economic development officer Dave Paul and the persistence of his family for keeping a plan alive to move to the area and bring their business, The Works, to Leeds and Grenville.

It's an area he says offers considerable opportunity and a location that has its own selling points.

"Be proud of who you are, where you are and what you do. It's small but everything imaginable is here in Brockville."

Schreurs' story is one of several positive developments in immigration for the region.

Efforts to attract foreign students have also been a success at St. Lawrence College, the Fulford Academy and Brockville Collegiate Institute.

But Wednesday's workshop was more focused on revitalizing a six-year regional campaign operated by the Leeds and Grenville Immigration Partnership and partially funded with federal support due to expire in two years.

The campaign is aimed at increasing immigration to help maintain regional population levels, fill a need for skilled workers and bring investment into the area.

After six years, a review was called to re-engage the community and identify gaps in services and how they can be eliminated.

Facilitator Karen McDonald-Hurley directed 50 participants, including service providers, municipal economic development staff and recent immigrants and foreign students through a three-hour session to assess the situation.

McDonald-Hurley, a planning consultant with the Opportunity Group from Maitland, said it's important to identify shortcomings and successes as part of the workshop.

It's more important to demonstrate how they positively or negatively affect the goal of increasing immigration, especially when seeking out funding grants, she added.

"That suggests a strategy for how to grow the program and move to the next steps," said McDonald-Hurley.

Matt Raby, who is responsible for international education with the Upper Canada District School Board, said it's necessary to have ongoing conversations about immigration to provide for the needs of the community.

Raby said foreign students have an immediate anchor in the community in the school they attend, something that is missing for many immigrants coming to settle here or individuals bringing specific skills to a local employer.

Frank O'Hearn, executive director of the Thousand Islands Region Workforce Development Board which serves Leeds, Grenville, Frontenac and Loyalist townships, said the need is widespread to bring in immigrants and find a way for them to get settled for the long term.

O'Hearn said he was encouraged to see the number of different sectors represented at the workshop and the enthusiasm of the participants seeking to ensure future immigration.

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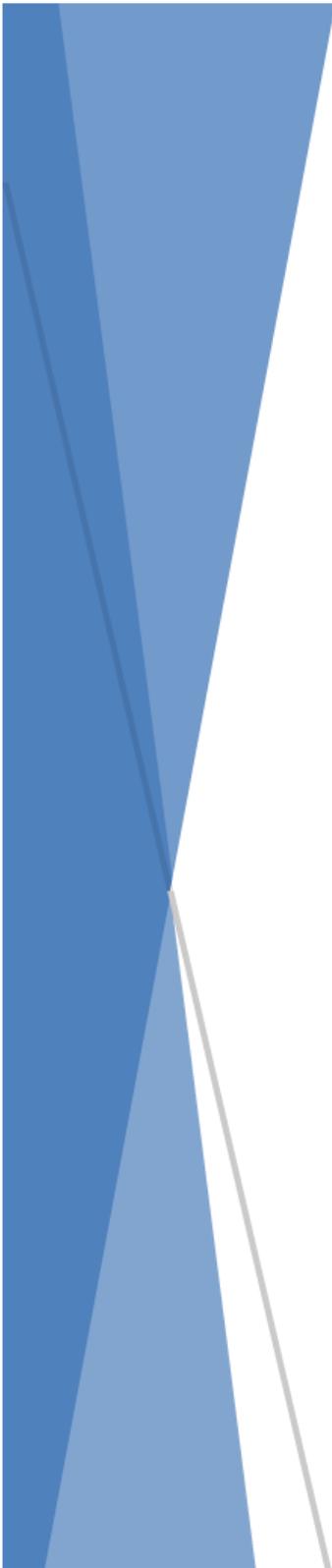
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APPENDIX F: ACTIONS ITEMS RESULTING FROM 'JOIN THE CONVERSATION' EVENT DISCUSSIONS

Feedback generated at the Community Feedback Event led to the development of numerous action items that will guide the Immigration Partnership through 2015/16 and in some cases, beyond.

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1. Create an informal ambassador program with newcomers acting as ambassadors.
 2. Continue outreach to schools so that newcomer students and their families are aware of community services.
 3. Arrange for free employer training with Hire Immigrants Ottawa.
 4. Recognize newcomer entrepreneurs through the development of an annual immigrant entrepreneur award.
 5. Continue to build the awareness of newcomers regarding employment services available to them.
 6. Ensure employment service agencies are aware of resources for newcomers: credential assessment organizations, professional organizations, basic work visa information.
 7. Continue outreach to cultural organizations to ensure they are aware of employment/settlement/community services etc. for newcomers to their groups.
 8. Distribute information (benefits of hiring, how to train etc.) to employers.
 9. Initiate a graduation scholarship for International Students.
 10. Develop a Mentorship/Ambassador Program.
 11. Help newcomers become actively involved in their local community.
 12. Continue to support and promote cultural celebrations.
 13. Facilitate newcomer focus groups to learn more about their challenges and experiences in Leeds and Grenville.
 14. Engage with non-traditional partners (i.e. service groups) to raise awareness of LIP and immigration issues.
 15. Seek sustainable funding for LIP, researching and applying for applicable funding opportunities and/or community partnerships.
 16. Assess the membership of the LIP Council and if necessary, increase member numbers, diversity and level of member involvement.
 17. Participate with regional organizations to share labour market information.
 18. Promote Leeds and Grenville via outreach to secondary immigrants.
 19. Promote Leeds and Grenville to International Students, in hopes that they will stay upon graduation, encourage family members to move here etc.