



ST. THOMAS · ELGIN
Local Immigration Partnership

MOVING FORWARD 2017

Building Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive Communities

Building Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive Communities

Our Vision

St. Thomas and Elgin County communities will be a culturally diverse, welcoming, caring, and inclusive community that will retain current residents, welcome newcomers, and provide them the opportunity to successfully integrate, contribute to, and benefit from social, cultural, and economic inclusion.

Our Mission

St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership (STELIP) is a progressive network that promotes and supports inclusion.

Our Principles

To ensure that the work of those associated with the initiative promotes inclusivity, the following principles have been adopted:

INCLUSIVITY - The work of the Council and the members of working committees will be inclusive of all immigrants in the St. Thomas-Elgin community regardless of their immigration status, citizenship, age, gender, health status, sexual orientation, and number of years in the community. The Council shall work towards equal participation while promoting social justice.

COLLABORATION - A working relationship will be developed between the host community and the immigrant community to build a welcoming, caring, and inclusive environment.

EMPOWERMENT - Our work will strive to promote new immigrants' capacity to live their lives with the ability to be economically stable, live in adequate housing, and provide for themselves and their families through their own means and their own decisions.

SUSTAINABILITY - A plan shall be developed to ensure that the work of the STELIP Council will continue to make improvements to immigrants' experiences and the community as a whole.

STELIP Project Team

Rachel LeClair | STELIP Project Facilitator

Petrusia Hontar | STELIP Project Coordinator

Shelley Harris | YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin Director of Education and Settlement

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Message from Local Government Officials



As Member of Parliament for Elgin-Middlesex-London, I am aware of the important work that the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership has done in raising awareness about the needs of newcomers. They do this while providing them the opportunity to successfully integrate, contribute to, and benefit from cultural, social and economic inclusion.

Newcomers bring a diverse set of talents and skills to the community so it is important that they have a positive and welcoming experience while embracing the basic principles of inclusivity, collaboration, empowerment and sustainability.

I have had the opportunity to work with St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership through a variety of community projects and have seen the tremendous work they have done for the community.

I thank the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership for the support they continue to provide to newcomers in our community and I look forward to working with them to continue building inclusive communities across St. Thomas-Elgin.

Karen Vecchio, MP



As MPP I've had the pleasure of working with the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership on many community projects and initiatives. Their staff and volunteers work tirelessly to promote an inclusive community for newcomers to thrive.

Newcomers play an important role in filling the skill gaps in our local economy while enhancing the culture of our area.

Through the leadership of STELIP, St. Thomas and Elgin has embraced the basic principles of inclusivity, collaboration, empowerment and sustainability. The community partnerships that have been created have improved the quality of life throughout the region.

I would like to thank the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership for their dedication in providing support to newcomers in our area. I look forward to continue to support their initiatives in our community.

Jeff Yurek, MPP



On behalf of Elgin County I would like to thank the St. Thomas Elgin Local Immigration Partnership (STELIP) for its dedication to providing newcomers to Elgin County with access to the services that they need to successfully transition into the community. Newcomers bring a diverse set of skills and talents to Elgin and they are vital to the economic health of our area. It is essential that they have a positive and welcoming experience in Elgin County and STELIP's work as an intermediary between newcomers and the services available to them is vital to making this happen.

Grant Jones, Elgin County Warden



On behalf of the members of City Council I would like to extend greetings from the City of St. Thomas. I would like to say a special thank you to St. Thomas Elgin Local Immigration Partnership for your work to ensure St. Thomas and Elgin will be a culturally diverse, welcoming, inclusive and caring community that will welcome newcomers.

We are looking forward to the year ahead as we work together to strengthen our local communities.

***Heather Jackson
Mayor, City of St. Thomas***

Message from STELIP Chair

Dear St. Thomas and Elgin County community,

As the St. Thomas Elgin Local Immigration Partnership enters its seventh year I am mindful of the tremendous support we have received during this time from newcomers, stakeholders, and agencies across St. Thomas and Elgin County.

The St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership (STELIP) was created to make the communities of Elgin and St. Thomas welcoming, caring, and inclusive. In consultation with our community stakeholders we developed a new three year strategic plan to guide our future work and have recently launched a STELIP newsletter to improve our communication with our community partners and newcomers. This will support community dialogue to improve our capacity to successfully integrate immigrants.

The STELIP Council members bring dynamic perspectives and experience from their sectors and from their neighbourhoods across the region. The Cultural Diversity Committee is an active group of volunteers and staff who to raise the awareness of local diversity and encourage the development of welcoming, caring, and inclusive communities.

The last year has seen much activity including our annual *Walk with Me* networking event and the *Moving Forward* evening celebration of cultural diversity. In addition, STELIP provided support for Unite for Refugees, a local coalition that shares resources and experiences to support sponsoring groups and refugee resettlement.

On behalf of the STELIP Council, we must also thank our very skilled and dedicated staff. Their insight into our community and their ability to make connections are the key piece to the great success of the partnerships.

We look forward to celebrating Canada's 150th birthday this year with events that celebrate our local cultural diversity and we remain committed to developing innovative plans to build welcoming, caring, and inclusive communities across Elgin County and St. Thomas. Please join with us in celebrating these endeavours.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Gerry Moniz". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gerry Moniz, STELIP Chair



Connecting Communities

Much of the work of STELIP is driven by our connections. The STELIP Council comprises representation across many sectors including education, settlement, employment, health, and economic development. In many cases, the work of these organizations does not intersect, but when using the lens of immigration and supporting newcomers, natural connections emerge. Establishing new relationships create many opportunities for partnerships. This year in particular, STELIP supported many new projects by leveraging the connections from the community. The fruitful partnerships that have been cultivated over the years have led to effective initiatives that are relevant and reflexive to the needs of the community.

In the Community

STELIP facilitates and fosters community connections, shares best practices, and participates in local, regional, and national conferences and community planning tables. This year STELIP took part in:

- Elgin Children's Network
- FESPA Celebration
- Mental Health Week Pavilion
- Low German Networking Conference
- Life as a Refugee Conference
- Pathways to Prosperity National Conference
- Poverty Reduction Community Planning Meeting

STELIP was invited to facilitate a session at the Pathways to Prosperity Workshop on Attraction, Retention, and Integration of Immigrants in Smaller Communities hosted in St. John's Newfoundland. Many of the communities in Atlantic Canada are small and rural and have similar challenges and resources to St. Thomas Elgin.

Ontario Led Initiatives

In 2016 the St. Thomas-Elgin Community was successful in obtaining funding from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to develop and launch the Welcome to St. Thomas Elgin Immigration Portal. This portal is a vital tool to attract newcomers to the area by providing timely information and a glimpse into the community assets and quality of life. It showcases newcomers who already have settled here as they describe important pieces of their settlement journey.

Under the *Rural Employment Initiative*, community, employment, and workforce development agencies have developed a memorandum of understanding with Newcomer Centre of Peel to bring highly skilled and educated professionals to our more rural communities to fill local gaps in employment. This would include supports from settlement services, job developers, employment counsellors, and employers to match job-ready immigrant referred by the Newcomer Centre of Peel to appropriate employment opportunities.

Connecting to Other Local Immigration Partnerships

South Western Ontario Local Immigration Partnership (SWOLIP) meet on a quarterly basis for shared learning opportunities, an exchange of best practices, and collaboration. The SWOLIP initiative is considered a promising practice for LIPs in other Canadian regions and by the Pathways to Prosperity research coalition.

Similar to SWOLIP, an online network was established to help connect LIPs across Canada. Information, input, and advice are shared through discussion boards and uploaded resources. This network provides access to a broader network of LIPs and helps provide different perspectives on challenges and barriers.

- SWOLIP is a network of 12 Local Immigration Partnerships in South Western Ontario and the regional francophone immigration network (Réseaux)
- At the 2016 national conference held by Pathways to Prosperity SWOLIP played an integral role in planning the day and STELIP contributed to the efforts.





STELIP Priority Areas

The St. Thomas Elgin Local Immigration Partnership was established in February 2011 and is funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. This initiative is led by a steering committee that strives to build *Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive* communities through a variety of collaborative capacity building initiatives. In 2016 the STELIP Council held strategic planning sessions to develop action items and reconnect the work to the members to the work of STELIP.

- Improve the Coordination of Information between Services
- Increase Awareness and Access to Appropriate Employment, Entrepreneurship and Labour Market Supports
- Promote and Enhance Settlement and Integration of Newcomers
- Increase Access to English Language Learning and Literacy
- Promote Public Awareness of Diversity and Inclusion
- Access and Analyze Data to Inform Priorities and Activities

The following sections outline the progress in the six priority areas in 2016-2017. In the coming year we will continue to help build *Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive* communities by supporting ongoing initiatives and establishing exciting collaborations that support newcomers.





Improving the Coordination of Information Between Services

This priority area focuses on establishing connections between the networks of services available to support newcomers in the region. Accessing services by newcomers can be a confusing and daunting task, in part because many newcomers are unaware or do not understand the many community services. This priority was established to help frontline workers from various sectors increase their understanding of the services offered by other agencies. The increase in knowledge and networking will support better quality and a higher frequency of referrals.

Priority Strategies

- Provide information about services for newcomers to employers and service providers
- Support the provision of opportunities for service providers to network

“ Definitely made connections that will help me better serve my clients. ”



Highlights

Moving Forward 2016

Our dynamic annual *Moving Forward* event celebrates the local cultural diversity, newcomers, as well as the achievements of STELIP throughout the year. The event has been engaging residents in St. Thomas with a variety of demonstrations and interactive components. It also provides a venue to collect feedback to prepare for the upcoming year of project implementation. In 2016 the celebratory event was opened with an Indigenous smudging ceremony and then attendees enjoyed a traditional Cambodian dance, information booths from local initiatives, and an international cafe. This event is driven by the community participation and brings people together to experience the culture that exists in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Walk With Me: A Newcomer and Service Provider Networking Event

The Walk with Me event was coordinated in collaboration with Elgin St. Thomas Public Health with a theme of Equity in Service Provision.

- Over 20 local service agencies were represented at the event (health, employment, education, human services).
- Three workshops were offered to provide in-depth learning opportunities.

The newcomers and service providers who attended Walk with Me found the event was a valuable experience and indicated that they now have a better understanding of newcomers in the region, the supports available, and how to use local resources. The evaluations showed the dramatic impact on participants:

- 87% feel they are informed, or well informed on systems navigation
- 95% increased their understanding of equity in the systems level to be informed, or well informed
- Participants cited they would embed equity in their work, use the HEIA to evaluate projects and programs, nourish connections that were made, and support more referrals after attending the event.

Elgin County Ambassadors

The STELIP team attends meetings for the Elgin County Ambassadors group which promotes connections across sectors, specifically with members of the Tourism Elgin Group who work to attract visitors and residents to the area. The meetings provide an opportunity to connect with County businesses, providers, and residents from rural areas to regularly network and exchange information about ongoing initiatives. In 2016 there are 35 active members of the Elgin County Ambassadors.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Stay up-to-date with services offered in the area and make appropriate referrals
- Ask other service providers to present in-service information sessions to your staff
- Send your staff to Professional Development and Networking opportunities



Promote and Enhance Settlement and Integration of Newcomers

Providing settlement support to newcomers as they arrive in a community is a key factor to ensure they have access to the information they need to make informed decisions. We encourage agencies and services to work towards adapting their policies and procedures to better serve newcomers.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Government of Canada has welcomed over 39,500 Syrian refugees between November 2015 and January 2017.

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>

In the region, YWCA Settlement Services and Mennonite Community Services (MCS) have Settlement Workers to help newcomers transition to their new communities. These front line workers provide dedicated, specialized support with expertise in immigration issues. They are also well connected with agencies and will provide a wide variety of appropriate referrals. However, if newcomers access an agency or business, it is also important that you have the tools to meet their unique needs as well. Most often times this can be achieved with minimal effort by simply making slight adjustments to current practices. For instance, agencies could review their brochures and literature to make certain they are written in clear language.

This priority is further strengthened by the Coordination of Services Priority that connects agencies and works to increase referrals across the community.

Priority Strategies

- Support agencies/businesses/organizations providing services that may be accessed or needed by newcomers
- Support newcomers to integrate/orient into Canadian norms
- Work with settlement services to connect newcomers to mentors/volunteers/long term residents



Highlights

Walk With Me: Newcomer and Service Provider Networking Event

While the main focus of the Walk with Me event is the coordination of services, supporting newcomers as they access information is another valuable outcome. Newcomers who attended the event were able to access information and make personal connections with local services.

We Are St. Thomas Elgin

In collaboration with the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board and Rogers St. Thomas, a television show to highlight local diversity, immigration stories, and services available for newcomers aired its second season. These episodes help newcomers better understand services that they can access locally as well as highlight the presence of newcomers to the local community.

- Season 2 Information segment profiled: Family Education Support Program Aylmer, Small Business Enterprise Centre, St. Thomas Chamber of Commerce, St. Thomas Public Health, St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital, Elgin Theater Guild, St. Joseph's High School Cultural Diversity Club

Unite for Refugees

To help support the refugee resettlement efforts in St. Thomas and Elgin, Unite for Refugees was coordinated by STELIP and others who had experience with refugee resettlement. Unite for Refugees is a coalition of individuals and organizations who are committed to sharing the resources and strengths to create a welcoming community for refugees. They work to support, connect, and organize learning opportunities on refugee sponsorship to ensure that our communities are ready to re-settle and welcome refugee families.

Taste of Syria

Taste of Syria, a community event to raise public awareness of the needs of Syrian refugees and foster an understanding and appreciation of Syrian culture, was well received in the community. The special guest speaker Dr. Iman Arab, founder of the coalition Bring Back Hope shared her knowledge of Syrian history and culture with insights on the ongoing conflict that has displaced millions of Syrians. Other participants in the event Take-A-Bite restaurant and the Al-Asala Dabke dance group brought a glimpse of Syrian Culture to St. Thomas

- Over 350 people attended the event to learn about Syrian Culture, taste the food, and enjoy some traditional dancing.
- Over 100 people listened to the talk from Dr. Iman Arab.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Invite newcomers to volunteer with your organization.
- Help newcomers navigate the social supports available in the area.
- Share tips of where to get help, specifically directing them to a local Settlement agency.
- Invite a newcomer to celebrate a local holiday or to experience something your family likes to do.



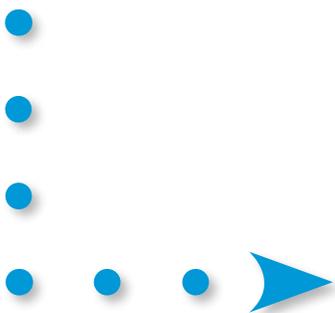
Increase Awareness and Access to Appropriate Employment, Entrepreneurship, and Labour Market Supports

Employment is the single most important factor in the successful economic integration of newcomers. This priority focuses on ways to better support newcomers as they settle into communities and set goals to gain economic independence. It is important that newcomers find meaningful work in their related field to help build sustainable connections to the community. The action within this priority will continue to adapt to the changing newcomer population and to the amendments in the Canadian Immigration.

Priority Strategies

- Increase opportunities to appropriately connect employers and newcomers to employment and entrepreneurship
- Increase employer's awareness of the benefits, incentives and other services available to hire newcomers
- Provide immigrants and newcomers information and training about obtaining and retaining employment

DID YOU KNOW?



A positive Labour Market Opinion means that the employer has tried but has been unable to find a Canadian or permanent resident for the job, that the job offer is genuine, and that the employer has met job offer commitments to temporary foreign workers they have hired in the past.

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/employers/temp-foreign-worker-program.asp>

Highlights

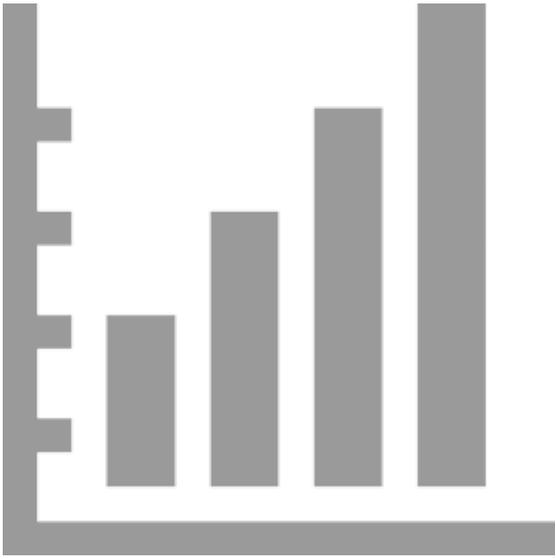
Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC)

STELIP has representation at the Elgin Workforce Development as well as at the Central Planning Council of the LEPC. This table consists of cross-sectoral employer and agency leaders from across the region who come together to make clear plans for gathering and distributing labour market information as well as developing clear strategies to build a strong and responsive workforce. Representation at this table provides the other members some insight into the specialized needs of rural newcomer employment.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- If you are experiencing labour shortages consider hiring foreign trained professionals either through the Rural Employment Initiative, Skills International, or the Express Entry system
- Consider offering mentorship programs to foreign trained professionals



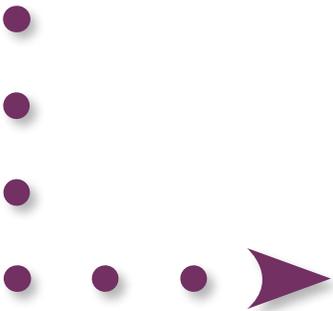
Access and Analyze Data to Inform Priorities and Activities

In order to ensure the work of STELIP addresses current and relevant needs of the community and newcomers, steps should be taken to ensure there is access to data.

Priority Strategies

- Maintain relevant information to inform strategies and priority areas

DID YOU KNOW?



We choose skilled immigrants as permanent residents based on their ability to settle in Canada and take part in our economy. There is a new system to manage how people with skilled work experience apply to immigrate to Canada. It is called Express Entry.

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/Immigrate/skilled/index.asp>

All Express Entry candidates will be given a score out of 1,200, based on the four parts of the Comprehensive Ranking System formula:

- Skills and experience factors (that we know are key to economic success for immigrants once in Canada)
- Spouse or common-law partner factors (such as their language skills and education – these are known to result in better economic success for both the spouse or common-law partner and the candidate)
- Skills transferability (including education and work experience – factors that when combined, result in better chances of being employed, and higher earnings)
- Additional points for those with a nomination from a province or territory or a valid job offer

Highlights

STELIP is a member of the St. Thomas Data Table in support of the newly formed Community Leaders Cabinet. These two groups are collaborating to prepare a quality of life scorecard that will be updated regularly to set regional priorities and track progress.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Participate in surveys and research opportunities



Promote Public Awareness of Diversity and Inclusion

The work of STELIP extends beyond newcomers and service providers to encompass the whole community of St. Thomas and Elgin County. The focus of the work in public awareness is to celebrate the history of diversity and to highlight what a newcomer presence can provide to the community. Some of the work of this priority area is coordinated and implemented by the Cultural Diversity Committee, a dedicated group of volunteers.

Priority Strategies

- Develop public campaign of multiculturalism
- Cultural and Diversity Awareness to Youth
- Celebrate immigration in the community



Highlights

Local Media Coverage

- STELIP and its initiatives have appeared in local media 9 times over the past year
- Topics include: promotion of events, and initiatives, refraining from using idioms in your business, and in coverage of local refugee supports

Declaring Municipalities as Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive Communities

Bayham, Central Elgin, and West Elgin held Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive Community proclamations and declarations. Along with the declaration, each community was presented with signs that are now displayed in their municipalities on the local service club boards.

- There are currently 36 Welcoming Caring and Inclusive Community Signs displayed across Elgin County and St. Thomas

We are St. Thomas-Elgin

The second season of We Are St. Thomas Elgin aired on Rogers. The television show highlights the services that newcomers access, shares true life accounts of a newcomers immigrating to the region and accessing services, as well as an entertainment segment that highlights traditional cuisine from a newcomer. This project not only helps inform newcomers of services that are available to them but also helps everyone to better understand newcomers and the many skills they bring.

- Season 2 Interaction segment profiled: Low German speaking students from the FESPA Program, A local restaurant owner from Lebanon, A local car wash owner from India, a retiree from England, the student founder of the Cultural Diversity Club from Korea, and a Cambodian immigrant who just had her first baby.
- Season 2 Cooking segment shared recipes from India, Portugal, England, Ukraine, Bahamas, and Thailand

National Canadian Film Day

STELIP partnered with REEL Canada and local agencies to host *Reel/FEST*, a Canadian Film Day celebration in the region. This five-day event showcased Canadian movies in partnership with local services and businesses, and STELIP hosted one movie for the ESL Students and another open to the public. The opening event was held in conjunction with partnering agencies and included a showcase of the different service providers connected to the initiative.

- Over 100 community members participated in the opening night
- STELIP hosted 2 of the 20 local events



Newcomer Champion Awards

STELIP has initiated several annual awards to acknowledge the work and dedication in building a welcoming, caring, and inclusive St. Thomas and Elgin County. The award has two categories:

Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion: An individual, group or organization who is working with the community to address the needs of newcomers by recognizing and responding to the needs of the community (one award for an individual and one award for an organization).

Individual Winner – Karen Palmer

Karen provided support to one of the locally sponsored refugee families in multiple ways: providing one-on-one language tutoring, arranging health related appointments, assisting with transportation, donating household items, and even arranging birthday parties for some of the youth. She worked tirelessly to support the family as they overcame challenges that arose in this major life transition. Since connecting with the refugee committee she has also started to volunteer weekly to support other newcomers in the community in one of the local English Language classes.



Organization Winner – Grace Community Church

Locally, our community banded together to support refugee resettlement and one local sponsorship group was Grace Community Church. Grace Community Church was involved in all aspects of supporting a refugee family resettle. Their work began with fundraising events like a bike rally and benefit concert. This pre-arrival work helped build awareness in the community to prepare to accept a refugee family. Their efforts went beyond anything they had expected as the team supported the family through some very challenging times and gave endlessly of themselves.



Newcomer Community Leader: A newcomer who is working to strengthen the community and build positive changes, by giving back in some capacity in a progressive way; demonstrating commitment to making a difference by creating welcoming communities.



Winner – Yunsu Kang

At the age of 15, Yunsu Kang founded a cultural diversity club at St. Joseph's Catholic High School. This club organizes school wide awareness building initiatives that foster welcoming, caring, and inclusive communities. Through her leadership position, Yunsu has mobilized many students to volunteer at numerous community events. Being the founder of the diversity club led her to become the Prime Minister of her Student Council in her final year of High School.

Initiatives of the Cultural Diversity Committee

The Cultural Diversity Committee (CDC) works to promote cultural diversity in the community by planning and implementing unique events. Their work focuses on education and building understanding and acceptance of other cultures. In 2016 CDC participated in a strategic planning session and re-focused for the upcoming year.

St. Thomas-Elgin Cultural Diversity Committee Members

- Iffat Farooqui
- Nancy Lovelock
- Irena Sompaseuth
- Susan Fortin-Smith
- Juliane Hundt
- Tricia Flatley
- Marna Berry
- Yunsu Kang

Youth Before and After School Program Diversity Packages

One of the focus areas for the CDC is engaging youth, and with this in mind, activity packages for youth have been developed and are being implemented in the YWCA Before and After School programs.

- The packages currently comprise 14 activities, a mix of crafts, games, and organized activities
- To date over 70 youth have participated in the various activities

Social Media Campaign

The Cultural Diversity Committee is very active on social media. The Facebook page (St. Thomas-Elgin Cultural Diversity Committee) and is a platform for media campaigns like the 12 Days of Celebrations. Through the twitter account (CDC-StThomasElgin) CDC can promote events and engage community members.

- The 12 Days of Celebrations showcased celebrations like: Hanukkah, Chinese New Year, Winter Solstice and Christmas
- The Facebook page has over 300 likes and the twitter account has almost 200 followers.
- The hashtag #CultureLivesHere has been launched in conjunction with #StTOnt and #elgincounty to promote awareness of the work of the CDC in the community.

**WHAT
YOU
CAN
DO**

- Join the St. Thomas-Elgin Cultural Diversity Committee.
- Start a Cultural Diversity Club in your school, workplace, or community group.
- Organize a potluck at your place of work and share cultural food with your coworkers.
- Connect with your neighbours by organizing events to build a community where you live



Increase Access to English Language Learning and Literacy

Language is a key to successful integration in all aspects of settlement, including social and economic independence. There are local options for accessing English Language Learning and Literacy; however, the classes may not meet the needs of newcomers that are working, need childcare, or have transportation barriers. Action in this priority area is in large part constrained by available funding.

Priority Strategies

- Increase awareness of available language and literacy training
- Advocate for improved access

Highlights

We continue to work with partners to collaborate on spaces and methods of delivering language instruction.



**WHAT
YOU
CAN
DO**

- Let newcomers know that they can access English classes in Elgin and St. Thomas at no cost.
- When you speak to newcomers, slow down and try to avoid difficult words or idioms.
- Help newcomers practice their language by striking up a friendly conversation.

Acknowledgments

The St. Thomas Elgin Local Immigration Partnership (STELIP) will continue fostering relationships and developing partnerships with local stakeholders. As we become more of a global economy, the role of immigration has sparked many conversations across the country. How do we balance growth and integration? How can we work together to strengthen the networks and resources of the local community? STELIP has and will continue to respond to these queries and, along with our Council, will build relationships to support our growth and prosperity.

We are enormously indebted to our STELIP Council members for their expertise, skills, knowledge, and resources they bring to our work. We would also like to thank the members of the Cultural Diversity Committee for creativity to help the community understand our diverse history as well as other cultures. We are also grateful to the many community members, government members, agencies and organizations across St. Thomas and Elgin County for their ongoing support of our project. The change and growth we have all witnessed could not happen without the support of the community. We thank you for creating a stronger and more welcoming community for all.

We would also like to highlight the dedication of the resettlement teams in the local refugee resettlement efforts. In the region there has been a long-standing commitment to sponsoring and resettling refugees from conflict areas around the world. Thank you to the individuals affiliated with Unite for Refugees and the local churches and agencies that came forward in response to the Syrian Crisis; together we were able to raise funds and affect the lives of several families in the community and Unite for Refugees will continue to support this initiative.

The challenging and overwhelming experience of resettling in a community has been eased for newcomers primarily due to the front line staff of the local Settlement agencies. Thank you to the Settlement Workers at the YWCA Settlement Services and Mennonite Community Services as your work has deeply impacted local newcomers and given them self-reliance to start their life in our community. Thank you to the local English Teachers as well as these dedicated individuals have created a learning environment that promotes friendship and fosters confidence in the newcomers' abilities to communicate.

We also thank Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for their funding, support, and commitment to building strong and prosperous communities.

The current and future success of STELIP's work in this community has been achieved from the ongoing efforts of many individuals committed to building Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive Communities!



Words from the STELIP Council • •

“ Mennonite Community Services (MCS) has been providing supports for newcomers to Canada through programs like settlement services, outreach, and our own radio station over the past 40 years. Further community programs that extend the support offered to newcomers after initial settlement are provided through our other programs such as Family Education Support Project - Aylmer and Employment Services.

Working with STELIP has strengthened MCS's connections in the community and established partnerships that have helped other services leverage our knowledge to better support newcomers. STELIP continues to be an advocate for our work and helps increase awareness of the needs of newcomers locally. ”



**ABE HARMS, MENNONITE
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

“ The Canadian Mental Health Association Elgin Branch (CMHA Elgin) helps STELIP by promoting and supporting various awareness raising events that bring light to the challenges to integration faced by new comers to our county. CMHA Elgin supports this project through initiatives like Walk with Me and Canadian Film Day.

This project is important to CMHA Elgin because newcomers to this community have been identified as a vulnerable group and we are committed to offering supports that meet their needs. ”

**CHRISTIAN DABOUD, CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION - ELGIN BRANCH**



“ A global perspective has the potential to strengthen any business, and global opportunities are growing rapidly. St. Thomas and District businesses can flourish by recognizing the diversity that exists in our community. Observing the successes of local businesses, tapping the resources we have access to, incorporating non-traditional practices, and utilizing the knowledge and skills of foreign-trained professionals are paths to success. The Chamber collaborates with STELIP to lay the foundation for making connections with local employers. ”

**BOB HAMMERSLEY, ST. THOMAS AND
DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**ST. THOMAS & DISTRICT
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

“ The St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and STELIP are best demonstrated by support and promotion. The St. Thomas EDC supports this project through initiatives like the #stthomasproud campaign and bringing industry and jobs to the area. This project is important to the St. Thomas EDC because newcomers to this community have been identified as a vulnerable group and we are committed to offering supports that meet their needs. ”

**CINDY HASTINGS, ST. THOMAS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**



“ Our collaboration with STELIP is an important part of achieving our goals. For example, we have a collection of materials for English language learners and newcomers to Canada - our connection with STELIP has helped us to improve this collection and better target it to its intended users. We want all members of our community to thrive and to be able to access all the opportunities that are available to them - we know that newcomers to the community have been identified as a vulnerable group and we are committed to offering supports to meet their needs. ”



**DANA VANZANTEN, ST. THOMAS
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

“ CCHC supports STELIP by fast tracking urgent needs clients (refugees) to our physicians, offering counseling (for clients) or system navigation (for anyone) to assist in filling out forms and working through various government agencies. The CCHC also works with STELIP and its partners to access community needs and provide programs and services as needed. ”



**GERRY MONIZ, CENTRAL
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE**

“ Having economically independent residents is an important factor to a thriving community. Supporting newcomers with specific needs and additional barriers to employment means that existing programs offered by ESE are altered to make accommodations. When our community is able to find meaningful work for newcomers we all benefit. Employment Services Elgin with the Support of STELIP strives to make this happen. ”

**JACKIE VAN RYSWYK,
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES ELGIN**



“ The community connection and outreach that is conducted through STELIP provides avenues of communication for newcomers and existing residents to become better acquainted helping St. Thomas and Elgin grow both economically and as vibrant communities. Our connection with STELIP gives us an effective avenue to work with all of the community partners to encourage continued immigration to our area, which we will need in order to meet the future demands for employment locally. ”

**DEB MOUNTENAY, ELGIN MIDDLESEX
OXFORD WORKFORCE PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD**



Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce
Planning and Development Board
Commission de planification et
de développement de la main
d'oeuvre pour les comtés d'Elgin,
de Middlesex et d'Oxford

“ The St. Thomas Elgin Local Immigration Partnership is important to Elgin County's Economic Development department - by ensuring that our communities are welcoming, caring and inclusive, we are able to attract both residents and businesses to our area from every step of life. Quality of place is a key factor for people looking to move their families and their businesses, and STELIP's work ensures a high level of quality of place for newcomers from near and far. ”

**KATE GALLAGHER, BURNS
ELGIN COUNTY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**



“ St Thomas appoints a city councillor to the board of STELIP in a supportive role to demonstrate the city's commitment to the aims and objects of STELIP programs and projects; to encourage a collaborative partnership with city departments and services as well as other local agencies to support social economic inclusion of newcomers to the city. ”



**MARK TINLIN,
CITY OF ST. THOMAS**

“The connection between Elgin County Library and STELIP can be best demonstrated by various initiatives on which we have collaborated for programming such as National Canadian Film Days, We Are St. Thomas Elgin television show, and through collaboration on newcomer resources that can be made available at libraries throughout the County. Elgin County Library supports this project by providing gathering spaces for sharing, learning and support and taking a partnership approach to library service through cultural stewardship and community inclusiveness.”

**SANDRA POCZOBUT,
ELGIN COUNTY LIBRARY**



“Strong rural communities are key to a strong, healthy province. My connection with STELIP helps foster activities that support immigrants and strives to keep rural Elgin economically successful now and in the future.”



**RICHARD HAMILTON, ONTARIO
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIR**

“Fanshawe is committed to assisting with educational efforts through Academic Upgrading and employment through Career and Employment Services. By collaborating with STELIP to build welcoming, caring, and inclusive communities we are working to attract newcomers and ensure pathways to resettling in St. Thomas can be accessed.”

**MIKE AMATO,
FANSHAWE COLLEGE**



“The Elgin Business Resource Centre (Elgin Community Futures Corporation) recognizes and celebrates the importance of partnering with the St. Thomas Local Immigration Partnership. Our community needs to be welcoming and inclusive, embracing newcomers in all areas. This includes but is not limited to new entrepreneurs in our community. At EBRC and STELIP we strive to ensure that all newcomers are positively encouraged to pursue their business endeavors here, in Elgin County. Elgin County is “open for business” for everyone.”



**KEVIN JACKSON,
ELGIN BUSINESS
RESOURCE CENTRE**

“As a Director at the YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin, we recognize how the many programs of the YWCA are founded in the principles of community building and advocacy, very similar to the work of STELIP. Within the Settlement Services, Adult Education, Housing, and Child and Youth programs, we advocate for social and economic inclusion for all as we work in collaboration with STELIP to build a welcoming and caring community. When people feel they belong, they feel committed, proud, and will give back to their community. St. Thomas and Elgin County have rich natural beauty and have the potential to be a prosperous and welcoming region. We want to be a foundational part of that!”



**SHELLEY HARRIS,
YWCA ST. THOMAS-ELGIN**

ST. THOMAS • ELGIN
Local Immigration Partnership



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St. Thomas-Elgin Cultural Diversity Committee



@CDC-StThomasElgin



#CultureLivesHere

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