



The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership staff and council members recognize the importance of working with community members to raise the awareness of Syrian refugees settling in Windsor and Essex County. The following is a summary of initiatives the WE LIP has been involved with over the past two months.

Leadership

- The WE LIP team have been at the Municipal and community discussion tables since the onset of the refugee resettlement plan was announced;
- The WE LIP has over 95 organizations– expanding capacity in the community , most notably the interaction between broader sectors (i.e. Health, Education, Employers, Community Services) and the settlement/language sector;
- Able to access and build on existing work as community collaborator;
- Been a participant on provincial and national teleconferences related to Syrian Refugees, including with the Minister's office, Emergency Management Ontario and most recently Provincial Syrian Resettlement Team Network;
- Role of the City of Windsor- Communication, Collaboration, Inspiration;
- Meet on a regular basis with Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County (MCC) for communication on number of refugees arrived in community, family composition, service delivery issues.

Communication:

- WE LIP staff created and are responsible for regular updating of the City of Windsor Welcome Refugee website page;
- Share content with Workforce WindsorEssex and the County of Essex to post on www.welcometowindsorsex.ca website;
- Worked with 211/311 to develop system and response to community inquiries and donations;
- Created refugee definition page;
- Positive messaging campaign - Working in partnership with Syrian Canadian Council and the Windsor Islamic Association, WE LIP is developing a video campaign that will consist of a variety of stakeholders and community members across Windsor and Essex County holding up a multilingual WELCOME sign – English, French & Arabic. Individuals and groups will be captured saying the word welcome in multiple languages. Social media will be used to spread the message to a variety of viewers;

Working with University of Windsor Project Syria group. This student organized collective plan to fundraise, volunteer and have also expressed interest in participating in a positive messaging campaign with the WE LIP - #WE WELCOME social media campaign;

- WE LIP Information sharing;
- Sharing information with Chatham LIP.

Awareness:

- Worked with Orientation Advisory Committee (OAC) to develop a service inventory that could be posted on the City of Windsor Welcome Refugees page and the County of Essex's www.welcometowindsorsex.ca website to assist immigrants, refugees, sponsors and community stakeholders to locate services and learn about eligibility, etc.;
- Worked with the City of Windsor to include locations of settlement services providers and language assessment on mappmycity.ca app;
- In partnership with the Windsor Essex Food Bank Association, WE LIP developed and distributed a Cultural Food survey to help ensure food provided at local food banks are responsive to the cultures in Windsor Essex;
- In partnership with Syrian Canadian Council and Windsor Islamic Association to plan Cultural Awareness sessions on the Syrian culture and Muslim faith. Two sessions are being planned for Windsor and one will be held in Leamington;

- Participated in South Essex Community Council Community Information session with Windsor Islamic Association and Syrian Canadian Council representative to provide background on Cultural Awareness Training session. The community members agreed to host the session in early February for Sponsors and community members;
- Responded to inquiries from local employers expressing interest in hiring Syrian refugees and referred to local Employment Ontario Service providers to assist.

Planning:

- Discussed role of WE LIP in response to Syrian influx with council members at Winter WE LIP Council meeting;
- Assisted with the organization and attended the ‘Planning for Syrian Refugee Resettlement Community Stakeholder’ meeting hosted by the City of Windsor and the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County. The meeting consisted of informative presentations facilitated by Jelena Payne, Community Development and Health Commissioner for The Corporation of the City of Windsor and the Kathleen Thomas, Executive Director of the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County and RAP Manager Marcela Diaz. Attendees participated in sector tables to discuss challenges and develop plans to move identified priorities into actionable items. The following sector table leads were identified: Health - Sarah May Garcia, Erie-St. Clair Local Health Integration Network; Education - Dr. Sharon Pyke, Greater Essex County District School Board and Dr. Mary Broga, Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare; Housing - Debbie Cercone, City of Windsor; Welcoming and Social Supports - Michelle Suchiu, Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership; and Settlement & Orientation Services - Debra Di Domenico, Greater Essex County District School Board Language Assessment & Resource Centre;
- Chaired Welcoming and Community Supports table. Recommended actions included working on an organized approach for donations; Cultural Awareness sessions; and volunteering. AS a result, United Way hosted community groups who have expressed interest in collecting, storing and distributing donations of clothing, furniture and food for Syrian refugees; Positive messaging campaign has begun; and community members interested in volunteering can register through the WE Volunteer portal hosted by United Way;
- Co-hosted Syrian Refugee Resettlement Community Stakeholder Healthcare table with the ESC LHIN. Attendees had the opportunity to participate via conference call or in person. ESC LHIN Communication Lead shared key messaging from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Planning. The group discussed the Interim Federal Health Coverage Program and an update on Mental Health Planning was provided. The meeting resulted in the creation of a healthcare contact list – including holiday hours, languages spoken, locations, etc.;
- Responded to request from the Windsor Police to work together with the Windsor Essex Children’s Aid Society to educated newcomers on child welfare laws and appropriate child behaviour management techniques.

Next Steps

- The WE LIP will take on a larger role to disseminate information and support to local community members who have sponsored refugees or are considering engaging in the sponsorship process. There are concerns that 'new' sponsors will be unaware of the extent of supports available for PSRs to support successful resettlement;
- WE LIP will be participating in discussions related to refugees and housing, transit, community supports over the coming months;
- Will look for ways for greater integration of the County of Essex into the Refugee resettlement discussion;
- The WE LIP be part of enhanced coordination of settlement sector in response to refugee arrival;
- Review ways to track impact of refugee resettlement on a systemic level, i.e. - reviewing changes to service delivery areas like health or education, and if those changes have long term benefits for newcomers;
- Assist with the creation of an employment sector table to include Workforce WindsorEssex, Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, Employment Ontario Network and Ontario Works.