



The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership works with community stakeholders to help make our region a more welcoming community for all. WE LIP was excited to share an incredible opportunity that aligns with our mandate and is being led by the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG).

WE LIP staff had the pleasure of meeting with Dr. Justine Taylor, OGVG Science & Government Relations Manager, to discuss the *Building a Stronger, More Connected Kingsville-Leamington* community initiative.

Essex County farmers rely heavily on support from the international farm worker community to ensure that we continue to produce fresh, healthy produce right here in Ontario. These farm workers leave their families for many months at a time with the hopes of building a strong future for their families back home. Many of these workers live in our communities for part of the year, returning to their homes in during the off-season. Workers come from Mexico, Jamaica, Honduras, Thailand and Guatemala, just to name a few of nationalities that support the Ontario Agri-food sector. Unfortunately, with so many different populations in a relatively small geographic area, cultural tensions, employment anxiety and feelings of isolation or separation can arise quite easily.

OGVG has taken the lead on an initiative aimed at developing a framework to create a stronger sense of inclusion and integration between resident and non-resident communities in rural locations. They aim to pilot this work in the greater Kingsville-Leamington region with the hopes of building a more general model of community integration.

The first step in the community engagement was the distribution of a survey aimed at identifying community services currently available and recognizing gaps. The data collected through the survey was synthesized and then presented at the *Building a Stronger, More Connected Kingsville-Leamington* community initiative event on June 28th at the Roma Club in Leamington. WE LIP was instrumental in promoting the event and extending invitations to its council members, many of which were in attendance, along with WE LIP staff.

Two more gatherings are planned for October 2018 and February 2019 for the purpose of identifying areas of focus for the work and to form working groups to take action in those areas.