



REGION OF WATERLOO

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

TO: Chair Sean Strickland and Members of the Community Services Committee

DATE: February 17, 2009

FILE CODE: A26-50

SUBJECT: NEWCOMERS WATERLOO REGION IMMIGRANT WEB PORTAL

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Municipality of Waterloo enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Waterloo Public Library for the ongoing maintenance of the Newcomers Waterloo Region (NEWWR) Immigrant Web Portal to the satisfaction of the Chief Administrative Officer, as outlined in Report CA-09-003, dated February 17, 2009.

SUMMARY: Nil

REPORT:

1.0 Background

In 2006, the Region was one of 7 communities who received funding from the Provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to develop a web-based portal to provide information to immigrant newcomers to our community. Regional staff have worked closely with the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN), and numerous community partners to develop this immigrant portal – known as Newcomers Waterloo Region (NEWWR). This web portal will provide newcomers to our community with easy electronic access to timely information on the community, the local labor market, skills accreditation, immigrant service providers, and other important information for successful integration.

The Region of Waterloo has two important reasons to provide this web portal. The portal will support all immigrant newcomers and their families who settle in Waterloo Region and will be used to attract skilled immigrants matching local employment needs. The portal may also be used by employers, community organizations, government, and other agencies or individuals. It is intended that the portal be sustainable by ensuring that information stays useful and up-to-date over time, and people continue to know the portal exists and how to use it.

This portal builds on the experiences and content provided by the current Newcomers Online Waterloo (NOW) website developed by the Waterloo Public Library and University of Waterloo's Computer Systems Group (Project NOW). This approach has allowed the Region to develop a single portal serving the community that takes the best of the initial Project NOW development and adds community experience and idea collaboration to this new product.

2.0 Development of NEWWR Portal

To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the portal, various community organizations have been involved in all stages of the development of the portal. In addition to the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN), groups consulted during the portal development have included:

K-W Multicultural Centre
YMCA of Cambridge (Immigrant Services)
YMCA of Kitchener Waterloo (Cross Cultural and Immigrant Services)
Canada's Technology Triangle Inc.
Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (KDCHC) & Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC)
KW Reception Centre
Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support
Civics Research Group & Newcomers Online Waterloo (NOW)
Computer Systems Group – University of Waterloo
City of Kitchener
City of Waterloo
City of Cambridge
Waterloo Region District School Board
Conestoga College
University of Waterloo
Lutherwood
Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo
Communitech
Waterloo Public Library
Kitchener Public Library

These partnerships are to be strengthened and permanently established so that these and other organizations can continue to be involved in identifying needs, providing and maintaining content, monitoring successes and challenges, and keeping the portal relevant over time. As well, ongoing support will be provided under a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Waterloo Public Library, due to their strategic involvement with creating the first portal – Newcomers Online Waterloo (Project NOW).

Immigrant Focus Groups have reviewed the draft marketing plan, and tested the product. Arrangements with Waterloo Public Library for ongoing support and maintenance are being finalized, and marketing activities are underway to make the NEWWR portal known and encourage use. Development and interaction with UW-Computer Systems Group for use of dynamic lists is being arranged. An image of the portal main page is shown below.

As noted, information on the portal is organized under the following main themes:


- Immigrating
- Employment
- Education
- Business
- Housing
- Health
- Activities
- Community
- Transportation
- Finances
- Resources

Explore the possibilities
NEWCOMERS
WATERLOO REGION

Sitemap More Languages Search


Home Immigration Employment Education Business Housing Health Activities Community Transportation Finances

My Story

 **Sanjay Govindaraj**
Immigrated 2000
From India

Settled in Waterloo Region in 2000, a few months after immigrating to Ottawa, Ontario....
[read more](#)

Photos



Maps

Meet Other Immigrants

Frequently Asked Questions

Get Help Now

Welcome to Waterloo Region!

Waterloo Region is just one hour west of Toronto, Canada, and is home to over 500,000 people. Immigrants from all over the world have made Waterloo Region their home.

Waterloo Region is an active, thriving place to [live](#), [work](#), [study](#) and [invest](#). It offers a rare mix of modern cities and beautiful countryside. The [Region of Waterloo](#) is made up of the cities of [Cambridge](#), [Kitchener](#), and [Waterloo](#), and the Townships of [North Dumfries](#), [Wellesley](#), [Wilmot](#), and [Woolwich](#).

[Bienvenue!](#) [Bienvenidos!](#) [Foon ying!](#) [Merhaba!](#) [Khush amaadiid!](#) [Selam!](#) [Khosh aamadiid!](#) [Dobro došli!](#) [Sushri aka!](#) [Bem-vindo!](#) [Chào mừng!](#) [Swaagatam!](#) [Bun venit!](#) [Witajcie!](#) [Pe kher ragle!](#)

Choose Waterloo Region
A great place to live, work, study, and invest.

Before You Arrive
How to get ready to move to Waterloo Region.

After you Arrive
How to get help and settle quickly.

This website has information about [choosing to come to Waterloo Region](#) and can help you [move here](#), [get settled](#), and start this new part of your life.

Can't find what you need? [Contact us](#).

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3.0 Memorandum of Understanding for Portal Sustainability

Waterloo Public Library and the University of Waterloo Computer Systems Group had developed an initial immigrant portal known as Project NOW (Newcomers Online Waterloo). The current portal builds on and enhances the Project NOW site. Because of Waterloo Public Library's background with an immigrant web portal, and their long-term commitment to supporting and maintaining the content of such a site, they are an ideal partner to assist with supporting and maintaining the Newcomers Waterloo Region portal. Based on discussions between Region staff and Waterloo Public Library staff, both organizations are proposing to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure the long-term sustainability of the NEWWR portal. The key elements of the MOU are as follows:

- The Region of Waterloo will be primarily responsible for the effectiveness and sustainability of the NEWWR portal architecture and functionality.
- The Waterloo Public Library will be primarily responsible for maintaining and sustaining the NEWWR portal information, and processing information requests from portal users.

- The terms and objectives of this MOU will be implemented and managed by a four (4) member Steering Committee comprised by one management staff member of Regional Municipality of Waterloo, and its Chief Administrative Officer or his/her delegate, and two members of the Waterloo Public Library management team.
- The Steering Committee will be responsible for ensuring that the NEWWR portal's long-term vision is consistent with this MOU, quality monitoring, change management processes, funding, policies, structures and guidelines for use and maintenance and marketing plans.

4.0 Next Steps

Subsequent to signing the Memorandum of Understanding, the Waterloo Public Library staff will be given access and trained on portal content management. The Steering Committee will be formally established, and terms of reference struck.

The project team is enacting its marketing plan, with intention to start formally publicizing the portal near to the public launch date of approximately March 9, 2009. Informal activities and attendance at local events will form one facet of this strategy, as will preparation of brochures, and media information kits. WRIEN and CTT (Canada's Technology Triangle) have been approached in order to facilitate joint marketing efforts. Conversations with the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration are ongoing for the purpose of establishing joint marketing opportunities for Ontario municipal immigrant portals. These are facilitated by the Province and in connection with the Federal Government.

5.0 Community Involvement

There are many formal and informal partnerships related to settlement and integration of immigrants in our region. The NEWWR portal Steering Committee will continue to utilize the various sectors as well as immigrants living in our community to incorporate information and functionality that facilitates attraction, settlement and integration.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

The need to successfully embrace diverse practices and culturally appropriate programs and services was identified through the Region's 2007-2010 strategic planning process.

Related objectives and actions specific to this initiative in the Region's recently approved Strategic Plan include:

- Improve programs and services to support immigrants.
- Develop & Implement a Web based portal for immigrants who are newcomers to Canada.
- Support and actively participate in the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employer Network.
- Develop a strategy to improve access to regional programs and services for citizens from diverse backgrounds.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding for the Portal development has been provided by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. The ongoing administrative support to the Steering Committee will not exceed \$5,000 per year and will be budgeted in 2010 operating funds. The content management, community facilitation and coordination will be conducted by Waterloo Public Library as part of their current mandate at no cost to the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. Technical support of the portal will be provided by the Region of Waterloo's Information Technology Services division under existing programs. Further development or changes of the portal will be funded through provincial or library grants, or on an individually approved case-by-case basis with proof of need.

OTHER DEPARTMENT CONSULTATIONS/CONCURRENCE:

The Cities of Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge participated in reviewing the Portal model, and reviewed the content shown on the web portal. All Regional Departments have been consulted and included in the review process, as have the KW & Cambridge YMCA, the Kitchener-Waterloo Multi-Cultural Center, WRIEN, Waterloo Public Library, CTT and Communitech, and various other agencies have also been consulted. The Region of Waterloo Public Health, Social Services, Corporate Resources, CAO, and Human Resources departments, as well as Waterloo Public Library staff, participated on the development Steering Committee. Legal Services has been consulted regarding the development of the memorandum of understanding agreement. Finance has provided support in reviewing project financial report requirements.

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PREPARED BY: *Katrina Howald*, Project Manager, Information Technology Services

APPROVED BY: *Michael L. Murray*, Chief Administrative Officer