

A Guide to Community Resources

**for Refugees, Immigrants and
Other Newcomers to Kitchener-Waterloo**

2nd Edition

Published by:

The Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC)
&
The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre

**March 2007
Updated: March 2009**

A Guide to Community Resources

for Refugees and Other Newcomers
to Kitchener-Waterloo

2nd Edition

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Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario
March 2000

Revised in 2007 by: Sarah Marsh
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About the Publishers

This guide was first published by the Survivors of Torture and Trauma Working Group of Kitchener-Waterloo in 2000. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, through the Ontario Administration of Settlement & Integration Services (OASIS), funded the publication of the handbook as part of a larger research project, "Building Community Supports for Survivors of Torture and Collective Trauma". The Working Group was dissolved in 2000 to form the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC). In late 2000 the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC) blended three groups: the Multicultural Health Coalition, the Survivors of Torture & Trauma Working Group and the Refugee & Immigrant Concerns Committee. CCORIC was established to:

- Inform its members and the larger community of the reality and impact of war, displacement, torture, and refugeeism
- Increase awareness and understanding of the realities faced by immigrants and refugees in the community
- Work with immigrant and refugee communities to identify common concerns and to take appropriate actions
- Advocate for systemic changes that are responsive to the needs of immigrant and refugee communities
- Monitor government policies on issues affecting immigrants and refugees; advocate with the government for changes in these policies

The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (KDCHC) provides infrastructure support to the Coalition, including the revision of this guide. For more information, see:

Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC)

519-745-4404 ext.208

Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre

59 Frederick, First Floor, Kitchener, ON N2H 2L3

Introduction to the Guide

This guidebook is for individuals and families who are new to Kitchener-Waterloo. It is also for the people and organizations that will welcome and support these new members of our community.

We cover topics that are among the most important for people trying to find their way in a new community and society. The information you find here will not answer all of your questions, but we hope that it will:

- Provide some answers
- Encourage you to ask more questions
- Help you learn where you can go in Kitchener-Waterloo for more information

This directory has been prepared in print and electronic formats. Copies of this directory are available through the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (see address below) or through the website www.kwmc.on.ca and www.settlement.org. It is also available from the "primary refugee serving organizations" listed on page 11. The Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns will attempt to update this directory regularly, so please give us your suggestions or comments. We will be consulting with community partners to determine if we can and should translate the directory, in whole or in part, into other languages.

The services and supports included in this directory are for Kitchener-Waterloo. If you live in Cambridge or Guelph you may wish to contact:

- **YMCA of Cambridge, Settlement and Integration Services**
258 Hespler Rd., Cambridge 519-621-1621
www.ymcacambridge.com/immigrantcentre.html
- **Guelph Multicultural Centre**
319 Speedvale Ave. East, Unit C, Lower Level, Guelph 519-836-2222
www.gdmc.org

Thank you to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, OASIS for supporting the first publication of this guide as part of a larger research project, "Building Community Supports for Survivors of Torture and Collective Trauma." Thank you to Gebrehiwot Berihun (directory compiler), Nash Majstorovic, Nery Flores, Gada Faez, Asma'a Yassin, and Ali Mukhtar (research project coordinators and researchers) for your efforts and patience and for the commitment you bring to your individual ethnic communities, as well as to the broader K-W community.

Thank you to the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (KDCHC) for supporting the second publication of the guide. Thank you to Sarah Marsh for revising and make it up to date. Special thanks for edits, ideas and supports from: members of the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns, Marg Hennig, Veena Kaur, Stephen Gross, and Sheila Braidek.

Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario

March 2007

Introduction to Kitchener-Waterloo

Kitchener (population 213,305) and Waterloo (population 113,100) are separate cities in the Region of Waterloo in southern Ontario. The two cities are commonly referred to as Kitchener-Waterloo, or K-W, because they are situated next to each other.

Many of the early settlers in the Waterloo Region were Mennonites who came as refugees from Europe, Russia and the United States of America. Refugees and other immigrants continue to be attracted to this region because it:

- Has a long standing history of hospitality and generosity in supporting refugees
- Is a clean, medium-sized community close to Toronto
- Has an increasingly ethnically diverse population
- Has two excellent universities and a community college, and
- Has a strong economy

Canada is a nation of many immigrants and this is evident in Kitchener-Waterloo. Between 1996 and 2001, over 14,180 immigrants arrived in Waterloo Region and a greater number have come in the past several years. A large number of these people were forced to leave their homes as refugees, like the Mennonites who arrived here many years ago.

K-W continues to be shaped and influenced by people who arrive here from many other countries. Diversity is a defining aspect of life in Kitchener-Waterloo. This diversity, represented by the more than 50 languages spoken in the community, signifies the important resources that are available to continue to develop K-W as a strong, supportive, and healthy community.

Primary Refugee Assisting Organizations in K-W

Several different organizations and offices mentioned in this guide. The following organizations, however, have general responsibilities to help refugees settle in K-W.

For general support and information about refugee/immigrant settlement:

YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services

519-579-9622

3rd Floor of 800 King St. West

www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/immigrant.asp

K-W Multicultural Centre

519-745-2531

102 King St. West, downtown Kitchener

www.kwmc.on.ca

The Newcomers Waterloo Region (Web Portal)

www.newwr.ca

If you are in the refugee claim process, contact:

Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support

519-571-1912

58 Queen St. South, Kitchener (in The Working Centre, Very near the bus terminal)

www.mcrs.ca

The local government office for immigration and citizenship information is:

Waterloo-Wellington Canada Immigration Centre

29 Duke St. East, Kitchener (corner of Frederick St. and Duke in downtown Kitchener)

www.cic.gc.ca/english/index.html

Immigration Call Centre in Ontario is 1-888-242-2100

For general information about Kitchener-Waterloo community services, contact:

The Community Information Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo

519-579-3800

151 Frederick St. 3rd floor www.waterlooregion.org/cic/

Diversity:

Recognizing and Respecting

Differences

Diversity: Recognizing and Respecting Differences

What is diversity?

Diversity refers to the unique and identifiable characteristics that distinguish us as individuals, and identify us as belonging to a group or groups. Diversity therefore includes **class, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and abilities/ disabilities**. Each one of us has diversity within ourselves, and we all contribute to diversity in Canadian society.

Why is it so important to recognize diversity in Canadian society?

Its history is rooted in aboriginal nations that carry diverse linguistic and cultural heritage. Canada welcomes approximately 200,000 immigrants a year from all parts of the globe, who carry diverse cultures, languages, religions and ethnicities. Canada also tries to protect the rights of people who represent other aspects of diversity such as class, gender, sexual orientation and abilities/disabilities.

What are the challenges of living in a diverse society?

Many of us are used to living in a community where people share a lot of commonalities in life style, language, religious belief, and cultures. It is hard for any of us to deal with something different from what we are used to, and that sometimes creates discomfort, stereotypes, tensions, discriminations and conflicts.

To avoid these negative effects, we have to realize that we are all different and special in our own ways. Recognizing diversity means respecting differences, and accepting the way other people lead their lives.

One of the issues immigrant and refugee communities face is the concept of **acculturation**. Acculturation refers to a process of understanding the new culture, adapting

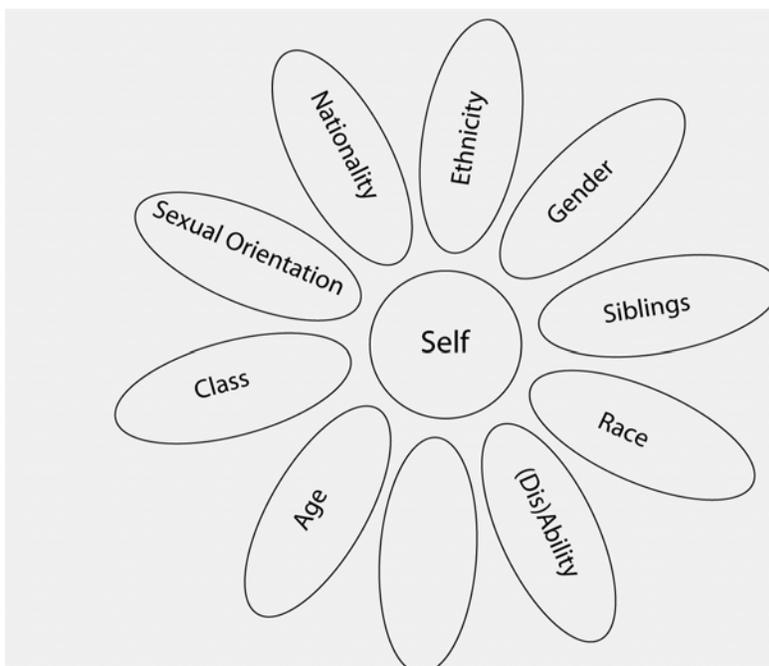
to it and adopting at least some of its practices while holding on to one's original culture.

The process of acculturation is becoming bilingual and bicultural- identifying with and blending two (or more) cultures together.

One of the challenges new immigrant and refugee communities experience is the conflict between old and new cultures.

Recognizing diversity will help you to:

- Learn about values shared by other cultures and people;
- Understand, accept and value cultural, religious, linguistic and social diversity;
- Value your own family and cultural heritage;
- Acquire or develop skills and attributes that will promote positive connections with others;
- Act to prevent bias, oppression, prejudice or other forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, skin color, religion, language, culture, gender, ability, social class or sexual orientation;
- Recognize stereotypes and media/social influences that distort our understanding of others;
- Respond or to intervene in incidents and situations stemming from discrimination or bias;



Each petal on this *Self-Flower* diagram represents a different aspect of one's identity or social location. The blank petal is present to acknowledge that there could be several more categories included. The *Self-Flower* can be used as a tool to think about what similarities and differences we have with others around us.

Education and Training

Education and Training

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Community Information Centre of Waterloo Region 519-579-3800	151 Frederick St. 3rd floor www.waterlooregion.org/cic	Walking distance from downtown; 8 Fairview via Franklin; 23 Idlewood
Conestoga College of Applied Arts and Technology 519-623-4890	299 Doon Valley Dr., Kitchener www.conestogac.on.ca	10 (from Fairview Mall); 61 (from Preston); 110 (rush hours);
K-W English School 519-886-3300	800 King Street West, Kitchener http://ace.wrdsb.on.ca/esl.html	7 (C, D, E)
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West, downtown Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Workplace Support Services 519-571-6009 / 1-800-265-6180	285 Weber Street North, Waterloo	8 University (University via Weber)
Ontario Student Assistance Plan 807- 343-7260	http://osap.gov.on.ca	
St Louis Adult Learning Centre 519-745-1201 (downtown)	80 Young Street, Kitchener http://stlouis.wcdsb.edu.on.ca/programs/esl.html	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Settlement and Education Partnership in Waterloo Region (SEPWR) 519-742-8220	154 Gatewood Rd., Kitchener	
University of Waterloo 519-885-1211	200 University Ave. West, Waterloo www.uwaterloo.ca	7 (D, E) or 8 University

Education and Training (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Waterloo District Catholic School Board 519-578-3660 Newcomers Reception Centre 519-743-3328	35 Weber St. West, -- Unit A www.wcdsb.edu.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Waterloo Region District School Board 519-570-0300	51 Ardelt Ave., Kitchener www.wrdsb.on.ca	3 (to Ottawa South)
Wilfrid Laurier University 519-884-1970	75 University Ave. West, Waterloo www.wlu.ca	7 (C, D, E)
YMCA Cross-Cultural And Community Services 519-579-9622	800 King St. West, 3rd floor Kitchener http://www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/immigrant.asp /immigrant/immigrant.asp	7 (C, D, E)

How can I improve my English? What is the best option for me?

English classes for newcomers are often called ESL classes. ESL stands for “English as a Second Language.” In Kitchener-Waterloo, ESL classes are offered through the public and separate or Catholic boards of education. You may hear English classes referred to as ESL or LINC. LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes are available only to landed immigrants.

If you are not sure where to begin looking for ESL classes that meet your needs, you can first go to the Language Assessment Centre, located at the **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**. Phone to make an appointment. Adult landed immigrants, convention refugees and people to whom Canada intends to give landed status can be assessed.

Some ESL classes are offered during the day. Others are offered in the evening or on the

weekend. Childcare is only available at some ESL classes. Some classes are continuous, but many have waiting lists.

I'm a refugee claimant. Where can I go to learn English?

If you are a refugee claimant, you cannot go the Language Assessment Centre to have your English level assessed. You are also not eligible for LINC classes. You are still eligible for regular ESL classes. You can register for ESL classes by going directly to the school that you want to attend and speaking to the person in the office. If you are not sure what class location or level is best for you, contact:

St. Louis Adult Learning Centre or K-W English School.

Refugee claimants need permission from the Immigration Canada Department to study more than 15 hours a week. You can request more information from the **Canada Immigration Centre** or the **Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support**.

I want to go to school (high school/college/university / special interest or continuing education courses). What are my options?

There are many reasons why you might want to take courses – learning for credit/accreditation or learning for interest. The local high school and college/university systems offer programs, diplomas, degrees, and interest courses in many topic areas. Contact each organization, or your local library, for more information about what is offered. They will tell you what you need to apply for courses.

It is possible that a school will want your previous educational documents translated for you. You will have to pay for this service.

I want to learn a trade. How do I begin?

To become a tradesperson in Canada, you need to go through an apprenticeship. Apprenticeship is hands-on training for people who want to work in a skilled trade. Apprentices receive on-the-job or practical training and some in-school training. To become an apprentice, a candidate must be 16 years old or older and have at least a Grade 10

education or its equivalent. Some employers and labour organizations require higher levels of education. If you have worked as a tradesperson in your country, you may be able to re-certify in Ontario. For more information, contact the **Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**. Another useful source of apprenticeship information can be found at: www.wwtab.com/Skilled%20Trades.html

I have a university degree or trade qualifications from my country. How does it compare to Canadian standards or requirements?

If you have professional or trades qualifications from your home country, there are specific steps you need to take. For assistance through this process contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**
- **Also see the EMPLOYMENT section of this guide on page 26.**

How can I pay for my studies?

If you are looking for high school credit courses, the fees are generally quite low or free. For more information, contact:

- **St. Louis Adult Learning Centre**
- **K-W English School**

If you want to attend college or university, the fees are much greater and you may need some help. The first question to ask yourself is whether you plan on attending school part-time or full-time. If you plan to attend part-time and you are working, you might be able to afford the school fees with your employment income. If you are on Ontario Works, or Employment Insurance, you might be eligible for training allowances. You should contact your caseworker and ask him/her what opportunities exist for you.

If you are planning to attend school full-time, you may need to get loans to finance your education. There are different ways to obtain educational funding. These can be in the form of bursaries, private loans, scholarships, work-study plans, or part-time employment. These include the *Ontario Student Assistance Plan –OSAP*, *Ontario Special Bursary Plan*, *Ontario Work*

Study Plan, and the **Canada Student Loans Program**. You should contact the institution you plan on attending for more information about funding assistance, especially bursaries and scholarships.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that you need to make a plan before you apply for your program of study. It is important to consider how you will pay for your schooling before you actually begin your studies.

**The
Education System
in Ontario
for Ages 4-18**

The Education System in Ontario for Ages 4-18

Ontario has a three-tiered system consisting of Elementary (Kindergarten to grade 8), Secondary (grades 9 to 12), and Post-Secondary levels. There are two publicly funded school boards: the Public Board and the Separate (Catholic) Board. In addition, there are private and independent elementary and secondary schools throughout the province. While the education standard is the same in all types of school systems, private schools operate independently and do not receive funding from the government. Public and Catholic schools receive funding from the government.

Do I have to send my child to school?

The law in Ontario requires that children between the ages of six and sixteen go to school. The education system begins with Junior Kindergarten (JK) at age 4. Senior Kindergarten (SK) is for students who are five years old. The emphasis in JK and SK is on developing social and pre-literacy skills. Students between 6 and 13 will enroll in elementary schools, and students between the age of 14 and 18 in High Schools. In general, elementary schools provide Junior Kindergarten to grade 8, or Junior Kindergarten to grade 6, with other schools offering only grades 7 and 8. Secondary schools currently offer programs from Grade 9 through to Grade 12, as well as Ontario Academic Courses (OACs). Students must choose their courses beginning in Grade 9. Students choose courses according to their goals and destinations: university, college, or workplace level. Students earn credits in high school and require 30 credits to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School (high school) Diploma.

A small minority of people choose to homeschool their children, which is permitted by law, as long as the parent can show that certain requirements are met. For more information about homeschooling, you can ask to speak to the Homeschool Liason at the **Waterloo Region District School Board** at 519-570-0003.

Ontario's Postsecondary Education system consists of a network of publicly funded institutions: 24 colleges of applied arts and technology and 20 universities and colleges. An OSSD (Ontario Secondary School Diploma, Grade 12) is the usual requirement for

admission to a post-secondary program in one of the colleges. Colleges prepare students for careers in business, applied arts, technology, and health sciences. They also offer an extensive range of part-time and continuing education courses, apprenticeships and skills training programs. If a student has done less than five years education in English, he/she may be required to pass an English test (TOEFL, or other tests).

The Apprenticeship and Trade Qualifications System: apprenticeship training is a partnership: an employer pays for workplace training, the apprentice invests time and effort, and the government pays for administration and the in-school cost of the program. Apprenticeship and Client Services Offices throughout the province assist individuals and firms with all aspects of apprenticeship training. Typically, programs range from 2 to 5 years, with a combination of on-the-job training and formal study in one of the colleges of applied arts and technology

Where can I find help with navigating the school system?

Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS): Citizenship and Immigration Canada, settlement agencies and school boards have established a school-based program called settlement workers in schools (SWIS). Communities with high numbers of recently arrived newcomers are eligible for this program. Currently, there are SWIS programs in six communities in Ontario: Hamilton, Waterloo Region, Ottawa, Peel, Toronto and York Region.

In Waterloo Region the school settlement program is known as **“Settlement and Education Partnership in Waterloo Region (SEPWR).”** The purpose is to help newcomer students and their families settle in their school and community. The program focuses on newcomer families in their first year(s) in Canada. Families with long term settlement issues or who need intensive support are referred to settlement agencies and other community services. Settlement workers speak different languages and connect newly arrived families to services and resources in the school and the community in order to promote settlement and foster student achievement. In elementary schools, school settlement workers meet with parents and guardians. In secondary schools, they meet with

students, parents and guardians.

Learning about the education system is part of the settlement process. School settlement workers will also explain essential school information and refer the newcomer to the appropriate school staff as necessary. The SWIS program has developed the 'Newcomers' Guides to elementary and secondary school', a series of handouts on key school topics. The guides are available in 18 languages. To read these guides, go to the settlement.org website: www.settlement.org

Employment

Employment

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials	www.cicic.ca	
Comparative Education Service (University of Toronto) 416- 978-2190	315 Bloor Street West Toronto, ON M5S 1A3 www.adm.utoronto.ca/ces/	Toronto
Employment Resource Area, Region of Waterloo 519-883-2101	235 King St. East Kitchener 99 Regina St. South, Waterloo	Walking distance from the bus terminal; 7 (C, D, E)
Focus for Ethnic Women (for women only) 519-746-3411	33 Bridgeport Rd., East (at King) Waterloo www.few.on.ca	7 (C, D, E)
International Credential Assessment Service Canada 519-763-7282 or 1-800-321-6021	35 Harvard Road P.O. Box 21001 Guelph, ON N1G 4T3 www.icascanada.ca	Guelph
Kitchener Service Canada Centre 579-1550 (Employment Centre) 1-800-206-7218 (Employment Insurance)	409 Weber St. West Kitchener www.servicecanada.gc.ca/en/home.e.shtml	8 University via Weber; 18 Guelph St.
Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Lutherwood CODA 519-743-2460	165 King St. East Kitchener www.lutherwood.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Ministry of Labour 1-800-265-2468 (no charge) or 519-885-3378 (local)	www.labour.gov.on.ca	

Employment (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers 1-877-817-0336 (provincial office)	www.ohcow.on.ca	
Ontario Ministry of Labour, Employment Standards Branch 519-885-5191 or 1-800-531-5551	285 Weber St. North Waterloo www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es	8 University via Weber
Volunteer Action Centre 519-742-8610	151 Frederick St. West Kitchener www.volunteerkw.ca	Walking distance from downtown; 8 Fairview via Franklin; 23 Idlewood
Waterloo Region Community Legal Services 519-743-0254	170 Victoria St. South Kitchener www.wrcls.ca	19 Victoria South; 20 Victoria Hills
Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network 519-749-6033	80 Queen Street N. Kitchener www.wrien.com	Walking distance from downtown; 15 Frederick
Waterloo Region Small Business Centre (Kitchener City Hall) 519-741-2604	200 King St. West, Ground Floor Kitchener City Hall www.bizenterprisecentre.com	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Waterloo-Wellington Immigration Centre 1-888-242-2100	29 Duke St. East (at Frederick) Kitchener www.cic.gc.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
The Working Centre 519-743-1151	58 Queen St. South Kitchener www.theworkingcentre.org	Very near the bus terminal
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board 1-800-387-5540	www.wsib.ca	

Employment (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
World Education Services 1-866-343-0070	45 Charles St. E., #700 Toronto www.wes.org/ca	
YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services Newcomer Employment Centre 519-579-9622	800 King St. West Kitchener, 3 rd floor www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/immigrant.asp	7 (C, D, E)

When can I start working?

A permanent resident can begin working at any time. If you are making a refugee claim, you must do several things before you can work.

Every worker in Canada needs a Social Insurance Number (SIN). To apply for this number, you must complete an application at the **Kitchener Service Canada Centre**.

After you complete the application, give it to the Service Canada Centre receptionist along with your immigration document. The receptionist will make a copy of your immigration document and return it to you. It will take several weeks to receive your Social Insurance Number card. People who are not permanent residents (e.g. refugee claimants) are given temporary numbers that begin with the number 9. When you become a permanent resident, go to the Kitchener Service Canada Centre and apply for a new number.

If you are a refugee claimant you must first pass your immigration medical and complete your Personal Information Form. Then you must apply to Immigration for permission to work (called *employment authorization*). For help with this application contact the Waterloo-Wellington Immigration Centre or the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support.

How do I find a job?

There are many things you can do to find a job. Speak to people you know in the area and read advertisements. Most people find jobs through their friends or people they know.

You can also look in the Classified (“Help Wanted”) pages of local newspapers (The Record, Cambridge Reporter, or Waterloo Chronicle) and the job listings at the Employment Resource Areas or Kitchener Service Canada Centre. Some job search websites include: workopolis.com or monster.ca. You may also find “Help Wanted” signs in stores windows.

Where can I go for extra help?

There are local community agencies that offer employment counselling and help people find work. However, these agencies cannot guarantee you a job. Finding work is not always easy. It is important to keep trying and to not give up. Many of these agencies provide a number of services and resources such as:

- Training sessions/workshops in resume preparation, letter writing, interviewing, and job searching
- English as a Second Language assistance
- Work placement
- Computers and Internet access
- Local telephone calls
- Entrepreneur classes for those interested in starting their own business

Some agencies offer sector-specific ‘Bridge Training’ programs to help newcomers with finding the information needed to access a career in the sector of their choice. Many of these programs are designed for internationally trained individuals with previous experience in their field. For more information about these programs, please consult:

www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/citdiv/apt/bridge.html

Some agencies offer specific employment support for newcomers:

- **Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network(WRIEN)**
- **Focus for Ethnic Women** (for immigrant and visible minority women)
- **The Working Centre**
- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services
Newcomer Employment Centre (NEC)**

Will volunteering help me to get a job?

Volunteering has helped many people obtain employment opportunities. Volunteerism has a long and rich tradition in the Canadian way of life. Volunteers engage in activities that benefit both the volunteer and the organization. Some of the benefits of volunteering are:

- Helping others
- Learning new skills and developing your current skills
- Gaining Canadian experience
- Becoming more comfortable and confident working in a Canadian workplace
- Meeting new people and learning more about the K-W area
- Increasing your chances of finding a job

How do I find an organization where I can volunteer?

You may be able to find an organization that needs new volunteers in your neighbourhood or through people that you know. For help in looking into volunteer opportunities in Kitchener-Waterloo, you can contact **The Volunteer Action Centre**.

The Centre matches volunteers with community organizations that need help. You should think about your skills, experience and interests. The Centre will suggest organizations you can go to become a volunteer.

I'm a professional. How can I work in my field here?

Finding work is not always easy. Even if you are highly skilled or university-educated, you may find that you are not able to work in your chosen field when you first come to Canada. You may have to take other kinds of work until you receive the licence or approval needed in your field. If you are interested in understanding how your credentials compare with a regulated profession in Canada, the website of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials offers quite detailed information: www.cicic.ca/en/index.aspx

If you have completed study or training programs outside of Canada and you want to attend school here, you will need to have your documents evaluated. If your educational

documents are not already in English, you will probably have to have them translated before they can be submitted for evaluation.

Your profession may have a professional association in Ontario. It is a good idea to contact the appropriate association related to your profession to find out if there are any special requirements for having your education/experience translated and evaluated. They may accept evaluations only from specific organizations. As well, they may accept only translations from certain accredited translators. Each profession has its own rules about who is allowed to use the professional designation. You need to contact the appropriate professional organization directly. For a list of professional associations, you could contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

Where do I get my educational documents evaluated?

The following are three organizations that assess foreign academic credentials educational documents. Contact them directly to find out how to use their services:

The Comparative Education Service of the University of Toronto evaluates foreign degrees and diplomas for general and employment purposes in Canada, but not for university admissions. However, some colleges and institutes accept a letter of assessment for admissions. Check with the school you wish to attend to see if they accept a letter from this service.

World Education Services is a North-American non-profit organization.

The **International Credential Assessment Service of Canada** evaluates elementary, secondary and post-secondary school credentials for employment purposes or for admission to education programs.

I'm a tradesperson. How do I work in my trade here?

If you are a tradesperson and want to find out how to compare your experience in Canada, you need to contact an Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities training consultant who can evaluate your qualifications.

Evaluation is based on an assessment of your training and employment experience. If you have letters from previous employers describing the work you have done, you will need to provide them. If you do not have these letters, you can submit a statutory declaration that describes your work experience. A lawyer, community legal clinic, public notary or the **K-W Multicultural Centre** can help prepare one for you.

In order to work as a tradesperson you need a **Certificate of Qualification from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities**. To get a Certificate of Qualification you must pass an examination. Before you can write the exam, you must show that you have experience in the trade. The Ministry has an apprenticeship office where training consultants evaluate your qualifications.

The Certificate of Qualification examination is given only in English or French, but you are allowed to bring an interpreter approved by the Ministry, as well as a dictionary.

How do I start my own business?

There are organizations in K-W where you can get help to start your own business.

Good starting points are:

- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services - New Canadian Career Quest**
- **Waterloo Region Small Business Centre - Kitchener City Hall**
- **Lutherwood-CODA**

What are my rights at work?

The Ontario Human Rights Code helps protect against discrimination based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or handicap. If you feel that you have been, or are being, discriminated against, you can find out more about what you can do at:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Waterloo Region Community Legal Services**

How much does my employer have to pay me?

As of February 2007, in most jobs you must be paid at least \$8.00 per hour. If you work serving alcohol you must be paid at least \$6.95 per hour. If you work in your home, or someone else's home, you must be paid at least 110% of the minimum wage (currently \$8.80 per hour). If you are a student under 18 and you work during school holidays, or less than 28 hours a week during the school term, you must be paid at least \$7.50 per hour. The minimum wage amount may increase in the next three years. If in doubt about the current amounts, you can check the website: www.labour.gov.on.ca and look in the Employment Standards section.

Do I have to work more than 8 hours a day?

In most full-time jobs you have to work 8 hours a day. In some full-time jobs you have to work 12 hours a day. You do not have to work more than 48 hours a week unless you want to.

Does my employer have to pay me overtime?

In most jobs, with some exceptions, you should get overtime pay when you work more than 44 hours a week. For each hour you worked in addition to 44 hours in one week, you are to be paid 1 ½ times your hourly pay.

What breaks do I get?

In most jobs you are entitled to a 30-minute break after every 5 hours of work. You do not have to be paid for this time.

Do I get paid holidays?

On public holidays (these are called statutory holidays) such as Christmas Day, most people have the right to get the day off with pay. If the right to paid holidays applies to your job, to get the day off with pay you must:

- Have worked for your employer for at least 3 months
- Have worked at least 12 days during the 4 weeks before the holiday
- Work your regularly scheduled days just before and after the holiday

What is vacation pay?

Employers must provide employees with paid vacation time or money in place of paid vacation time. If you do not have paid vacation time, you must be paid a minimum of 4% of your total wages over the 12 months that you must work to qualify for paid vacation. If you have worked less than 12 months when your job ends, you must be paid at least 4% of all wages you earned working for that employer.

What do I need to know about on the job safety?

Under the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act you have 3 basic rights:

- **Knowledge:** the right to know if your working conditions are safe
- **Participation:** the right to participate in making sure that your workplace is safe
- And above all, **Refusal:** the right to refuse to do unsafe work

You, your supervisor, and your employer have a responsibility to ensure that you have a safe and healthy workplace. Always keep a record of the dates and hours you work. Any time you have a problem, make sure that you follow the correct procedures provided for you and your fellow employees to address problems at work. If you do not know the procedures, ask your supervisor or employer; it is the employer's obligation to provide proper procedures to employees. Always keep a record of what problem happened, when, and what you and your employer did in response. Also tell someone else, so that they know what is happening to you. Do not take chances with your health. Do not let your employer take chances with your health.

In Ontario there are laws protecting workers from harm at work. The employer has responsibility to provide a safe workplace and to protect the workers on the job by having safety equipment and procedures in place. Employees have a responsibility to follow procedures and report safety concerns. Unfortunately workers who are not able to understand the law or safety procedures, or who have fewer opportunities or options may be at greater risk in the workplace. For example new immigrants and refugees may not know Canadian laws and may have a hard time finding a job in the first place. The temptation to

work ‘at all costs’ may result in people sacrificing their health for the sake of their jobs.

Work is not the only thing that affects or determines our health. And sometimes it is hard to know if an injury or illness was caused by the job or not. If you are concerned that your job is affecting your health, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Where can I find out more information about my rights and workplace health and safety?

For more information about workplace health and safety and your rights contact: **The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)**. This organization outlines the health and safety rights and responsibilities of both employees and employers.

The **Ministry of Labour** enforces labour legislation and advances safe, fair, and harmonious workplace practices that are essential to the social and economic well-being of the people of Ontario.

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers: an association of worker-oriented health clinics with clinics in Hamilton, Sudbury, Windsor, Sarnia-Lambton, and Toronto.

I’ve been injured at work. What can I do?

The Workers’ Compensation system provides benefits to people temporarily or permanently disabled because of a work-related injury or disease. You must file a claim with the local Workers’ Safety and Insurance Board if you are injured at work. Your employer must file this claim on your behalf. If your employer tells you not to file a claim, you should get help to find out what your rights are. For more information, contact **Waterloo Region Community Legal Services**.

What if I lose my job?

Employment Insurance (EI) is run by the federal government and provides benefits (a percentage of your wages) to people who have lost their jobs. There are rules to decide who qualifies for EI and how long they can collect benefits. The local Human Resources and Social Development Canada Centre has more information.

If you quit your job or are fired, you may have trouble collecting benefits. No matter

what, make sure that you get your **Record of Employment** from your employer. They must give you this document within 2 weeks after your last day of work. You will need this form to apply for EI. If you do not have this form, you should still apply for EI. The Kitchener Service Canada Centre counsellor will help you get the form.

My employer is paying me in cash, or with a cheque, but without payroll deductions. What does this mean?

If you are not receiving a regular paycheque with deductions from your wages for income tax, Employment Insurance, or Canada Pension Plan, then you are not eligible for EI benefits when you leave the job. For example, you may be working as a *contract worker*. This means that you are not considered an employee on salary, but as someone who is doing work either for a specific period of time, or as a casual worker.

Financial Management

Financial Management

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Canada Revenue Agency Income Tax Office 519-579-2230	166 Frederick St., Kitchener www.cra-arc.gc.ca	Walking distance from downtown; 8 Fairview via Franklin; 23 Idlewood
Catholic Family Counselling Centre 519-743-6333	400 Queen Street South Kitchener www.cfcchelps.ca	Walking distance from bus terminal; 2 Forest Hill; 25 Queen South
Children's Needs Distribution Centre 519-745-9461	135 Highland Rd. W. Kitchener (in Highland Baptist Church)	8 University via Westmount; 24 Highland
Community Outreach Program 519-883-2290	Call the community information line (519-883-2290).	
Financial Consumer Agency of Canada 1-866-461-FCAC (3222)	Ottawa office only www.fcac-acfc.gc.ca	
House of Friendship Food Hamper Program 519-742-0662	807 Guelph St. Kitchener www.houseoffriendship.org/program_community_foodhamper.html	6 Bridgeport; 18 Guelph Street
K-W Crisis Pregnancy Centre – Care Closet 519-886-4001	22 King St. South, #303 Waterloo www.pregnancycentre.ca	7 (C, D, E)
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West downtown Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support 519-571-1912	58 Queen St. S., Kitchener (in TheWorking Centre) www.mcrs.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Mennonite Thrift Shop 519-743-5021	335 Lancaster St. West Kitchener	6 Bridgeport

Financial Management (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Rockway Thrift Shop 519-578-8640	137 King St. East Kitchener	Walking distance from the bus terminal
St. John's Kitchen 519-745-8928	97 Victoria St. N. 2 nd floor Kitchener www.theworkingcentre.org	Walking distance from downtown; 18 Guelph St.
Salvation Army Community and Family Services 519-745-4215	300 Gage Ave., (near Belmont) Kitchener	8 University via Westmount
Salvation Army Thrift Shops 519-584-1818 519-578-4800	563 Highland Rd. W. (at Westmount) Kitchener 1436 Victoria St. N., Kitchener	24 Highland; 15 Frederick
Society of St. Vincent de Paul 519-742-8622	328 King Street, W. Kitchener	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Value Village 519-576-4403	120 Ottawa St. North (at Weber St.) Kitchener	8 Fairview via Franklin
Waterloo Generations 519-886-6226	50 Bridgeport Rd. Waterloo	7 (C, D, E)
Worth a Second Look 519-569-7566	97 Victoria St. North, Kitchener (near Weber St.) www.theworkingcentre.org	Walking distance from downtown; 18 Guelph Street
YMCA, Cross-Cultural and Community Services 519-579-9622	800 King St. West, 3 rd floor Kitchener www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/immigrant.asp	7 (C, D, E)

What is financial management?

This guide talks about financial management for several different reasons. It provides

information about banking, income tax, and some government financial benefits. The guide also talks about financial management because, for many people, it can be difficult financially to live in Canada. This is especially true if you are paid a low wage or you receive social assistance (welfare). Therefore, this section includes suggestions for how people can obtain the things they need for as little money as possible.

How do I open a bank account?

There are different banks. The services they offer are very similar. Which bank you use is a personal choice. It may be the bank that is close to where you live or where you can easily open an account.

Most banks will ask for three pieces of identification with your signature when you want to open an account. You can use your Social Insurance Number card, your Canadian immigration document, and something like a driver's licence or passport. You may not have three pieces of identification when you first arrive in K-W and you may have some trouble opening an account. However, it is the bank's obligation to provide low-cost accounts to everyone who provides proper identification. You will need two pieces of identification, including at least one with a photo ID. Otherwise, you need one piece of identification and a sponsor (community member with a banking history in good standing). For advice on opening a bank account, you can read about your rights on the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada website, or you could contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support (refugee claimants)**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

What type of bank account should I have?

Banks have different types of accounts. You will be asked what type of account you want to open. This is your choice. All of the major banks in Canada are obligated to make available a Low Cost Account to consumers. Most credit unions also offer low cost accounts. You probably want to choose the one that is the cheapest and most convenient for

you. Each type of account will charge you a certain amount for using bank services. You should know how much you pay for these services and when (monthly or each time you use the bank). After you have opened an account you can ask the bank to change it if you decide that another kind is better.

What is a bank machine?

A bank machine is an automated, self-serve banking service that you can use even when the bank is closed. You can use these machines to get cash from your account, to pay bills, or to deposit cheques. You may be very familiar with bank machines or you may be using one for the first time. If you are not familiar with bank machines, ask your bank to explain how it works. You can use a bank machine once you have opened an account and you have received a bank card. It is important that you not tell your Personal Identification Number (PIN) to any other person.

Can I do my banking from home?

Two common ways to pay bills or transfer money from one account to another are Internet Banking and Telephone Banking. All major banks are set up to offer these services.

Do I need a credit card?

Credit cards are very popular in Canada. Many people have them but you are not required to have one. It is very convenient to buy items with credit cards. It is also very expensive and it may become a serious problem if someone is unable to pay his or her credit card bill in full every month.

Many businesses encourage people to buy their products on credit. This sounds very attractive but it is often done to encourage people to buy items that they may not be able to afford. Once you begin to pay interest on your credit then it also becomes very expensive. If someone is unable to pay their credit account, then the company can take back their product without returning any money to the customer.

It is very important for a person to make sure that they can afford to use credit. If someone is having problems because they cannot pay their bill, they can find help in the

community. They can receive help to plan how to pay their bills. They can have help talking to the people and companies to whom they owe money. For free Credit Counselling contact the **Catholic Family Counselling Centre**.

It is expensive to live in Canada. Where can I find food, clothing, furniture, and other things at lower prices?

Different stores charge different prices for food, clothing, and other things you need to live. You may want to ask your relatives, family, friends, or fellow ESL students where they shop for good prices. There are also special services or stores in K-W where you can find different items for free or at a low price. This guide does not provide a list of all of these places. It only gives examples of places to go for:

1. Clothing

- **Children's Needs Distribution Centre** (free used clothing, toys, and equipment for babies and children)
- **K-W Crisis Pregnancy Centre Care Closet** (free used clothing for babies, very young children, and pregnant mothers without partners)
- **Salvation Army Family and Community Services** (call for an appointment)

2. Clothing and small household items

- **Mennonite Central Committee Thrift Shop, Rockway Thrift Shop**
- **Salvation Army**
- **Value Village**

3. Furniture

- **Waterloo Generations**
- **Worth A Second Look / St. Vincent de Paul Society**
- **Salvation Army** (at 1436 Victoria St.)

4. Food

- **House of Friendship Food Hampers** (a free box of food every 2 months)
- **St. John's Soup Kitchen** (free lunches every Monday-Friday, 11:30am-1pm)
- **Salvation Army** (call for an appointment)

- **Community Outreach Worker (call the community outreach information line)**

5. Recreation

You and your children may be eligible for help to participate in City of Kitchener or City of Waterloo recreation programs. For more information on this, see the Socialization and Integration section of this Guide on page 116.

You may also be able to find used furniture, bicycles, and other items by looking at advertisements in the K-W Record's Classified section, or a free magazine called the Kitchener Penny Saver. It is also very popular in Canada, especially in the summer and fall, for people to hold sales called garage sales outside their homes or in their neighbourhoods.

Do I need to complete an income tax form?

Every Canadian resident (citizen, permanent resident, refugee claimant, or work visa resident) must complete an income tax return (form) every year. This form is a report to the government of how much money you received and how much income tax you paid in the past year. You must submit an income tax return in order to receive government benefits such as the child tax credit and the GST credit.

Where can I get help to complete my Income Tax Return?

You must complete your income tax return and send it to the government by April 30. Some organizations have volunteers who can help you complete your tax form. Ask for this help before the middle of April. For this help contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Canada Revenue Agency Income Tax Centre**

When do I apply for the Canada Child Tax Benefit?

The Canada Child Tax Benefit is a monthly benefit paid by the government to families with children under the age of 18. To be eligible for this support you must be a citizen, permanent resident, or recognized Convention refugee (if you were a refugee claimant). Your child or children must be living with you. You can apply for this benefit as soon as you

have immigration status, your child is born, or your child comes to live with you.

Application information is provided by the **Revenue Canada Income Tax Office**.

Health Services

Health Services

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
ACCKWA: (AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener; Waterloo and Area) 519-570-3687	2B-625 King St. E., Kitchener www.acckwa.com	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Canadian Mental Health Assoc. Waterloo Regional Branch 519-744-7645	67 King St. East Kitchener (at Benton St.) www.cmhawrb.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Catholic Family Counselling Centre 519-743-6333	400 Queen St. South Kitchener www.cfcchelps.ca	Walking distance from bus terminal; 25 Queen South
The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario	www.cpso.on.ca (choose Doctor Search)	
Community Health Helpers 519-745-4404	59 Frederick St., Kitchener (Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre)	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Emergency: Medical/Fire/Safety 911		
Grand River Hospital 519-742-3611 Emergency 519-749-4242	835 King St. West Kitchener www.grandriverhospital.on.ca	7 (C, D, E)
Greater KW Chamber of Commerce 519-576-5000	80 Queen Street N. Kitchener www.greaterkwchamber.com	Walking distance from bus terminal; 15 Frederick
Healthcare Connect 1-800-445-1822	Phone only	
Interfaith Institute for Couples and Families 519-884-0000	480 Charles St. E., Kitchener www.interfaithmft.on.ca	7 (A, B, F)
Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre 519-745-4404	59 Frederick St., Kitchener	Walking distance from the bus terminal

Health Services (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
K-W Counselling Services 519-884-0000	480 Charles St. E., Kitchener www.kwcounselling.com	7 (A, B, F)
Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre 519-571-0121 24 hour hotline: 519-741-8633	201-151 Frederick St. Kitchener www.kwsasc.org	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support 519-571-1912	58 Queen St. S, Kitchener (in the Working Centre) www.mcrs.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Ontario Ministry of Health (OHIP) 1-800- 268-1154	1400 Weber St. East, Unit 2B, Kitchener	8 Fairview Mall via Franklin; 7B (Fairview via Weber)
St. Mary's General Hospital 519-744-3311 Emergency 519-749-6410	911 Queen's Blvd., Kitchener www.smgh.ca	25 Queen South
Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000	Phone only	
Urgent Care Clinic 519-748-2327 519-745-2273	385 Fairway Rd. South 751 Victoria St. S.	7 Fairview Mall; 19 or 20 Victoria Hills
Waterloo Region Community Health Dept 519-883-2000 (general info)	99 Regina St. North, Waterloo	7 (C, D, E)
Weber Medical Centre 519-748-6933	5A-1400 Weber St. E. (BlockBuster Plaza) Kitchener	8 Fairview Mall via Franklin; 7B (Fairview via Weber)
YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services 519-579-9622	800 King St. West, 3 rd floor Kitchener www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/immigrant.asp	7 (C, D, E)

Some of us may not think about going to our health care provider unless we are sick. It is important to know that health care is more than treating sickness. Health care is also about treating sickness, preventing illness and promoting health. Participating in preventive care often can prevent serious illness.

Who pays for health care in Canada?

Most health care is paid for by the government (federal or provincial governments). The health care system is different from province to province.

Who pays for health services in Ontario?

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care pays for health agencies and services such as:

- OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan)
- Community Care Access Centres
- Public Health Departments
- Community Health Centres

What is OHIP?

In Canada each province is responsible for the delivery of health insurance services. In Ontario the health insurance program is known as the *Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP)*. OHIP covers a wide range of basic and emergency health services. Most necessary medical services including visits to a family doctor, hospital or clinic, and laboratory tests are covered by OHIP. OHIP does not, however, pay for dental care (except for surgery done in a hospital), medicine, prescription drugs recommended by your doctor, or the cost of eyeglasses. If you want to receive OHIP you must be a permanent resident of Canada or be accepted as a Convention refugee. You must also live in Ontario for at least six months each year.

Who is eligible for OHIP?

Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and Convention Refugees who live in Ontario

are eligible for OHIP coverage. Every adult and child needs an Ontario Health card (OHIP).

How do I get a health card?

To apply for an OHIP health card go to: **The Ministry of Health, Ontario Health Insurance Office** in Kitchener (Please see the attached table for complete address of the office for Kitchener-Waterloo residents). Take three documents with you. The documents should be original. Example: your original immigration paper (to show your immigration status), proof that you live in Ontario (for example a bill from the electricity company, driver's licence, library card, telephone bill, or bank statement), and Social Insurance Card.

If you do not have an address or live in a shelter, contact the **Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre** for help. The Community Health Centre has an identification clinic that helps people who are without an address, or who need to replace lost or stolen identification in order to assist them in getting a health card. The Community Health Centre also helps homeless people get health coverage (to contact the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre see the attached table for complete address).

I am not eligible for an OHIP health card. Who pays for my health care?

Visitors/tourists, students, and temporary workers cannot receive an OHIP health card. They should buy health coverage from a private insurance company. You cannot receive

OHIP coverage, even if you are a permanent resident, until you have lived in Ontario for three months. You may check with the Citizenship and Immigration Canada office to get health insurance under the

Interim Federal Health Program (IFH) pays for:

- Essential health services and emergencies to treat or prevent serious sickness- includes visits to a doctor or specialist, hospital treatment, tests and x-rays
- Emergency dental services to alleviate pain, and active infection
- Contraception and pre-natal care for pregnant women
- Essential prescription medicine
- Eye examinations- if there is pain or serious sight problem
- Immigration medical examination

Interim Federal Health (IFH) program for the first three months.

You also cannot receive OHIP if you are a refugee claimant. You can have health insurance under the **Interim Federal Health (IFH)** Program. This Program helps refugee

Services not covered under the IFH:

- Diagnostic surgery (surgical, laboratory, or x-ray) when no significant medical short-term complications are foreseen
- High cost medications
- Allergy testing
- All routine medical examinations (e.g. yearly physicals, pre-employment examinations, eye exams)
- General assessments, counselling, psychotherapy by general practitioners
- Elective surgery
- High cost procedures
- Infertility work
- Sports medicine and physiotherapy (unless essential)
- Ambulance services (unless emergency)
- Chiropractic services
- Non emergency dental services
- Eyewear (unless severe defect present)
- Over-the-counter medications

In some cases IFH pays for the above and other services not listed here by **prior approval** only.

Service providers should contact the Citizenship and Immigration Canada, IFH Program before they provide the services for approval.

claimants who do not have OHIP. The program is designed to provide limited temporary medical coverage prior to your qualification for OHIP. IFH does not replace OHIP and does not provide the same extent of coverage allowed to permanent residents. The program is temporary. If your refugee claim is accepted, OHIP coverage starts the same day the convention status is granted. If your application is not accepted you will still get IFH coverage until you receive a removal order from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. IFH also gives support to Convention Refugees to cover the medical care not covered by OHIP. If you have questions about the

Interim Federal Health Program (IFH), you could contact **The Waterloo-Wellington Citizenship & Immigration Centre** (see contact info on page 11).

How do I find a health care provider?

Most Canadians visit their health care providers (doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and other health professionals) for advice about health problems and treatment. Your health care provider is the person you see when you are sick or need a check up. When you have a health care provider, you usually go to the same person (s) each time. It is especially important to have a health care provider if you have a serious ongoing medical problem. You need to call ahead of time to make an appointment. Most health care providers, such as doctors, in Canada are very busy. Make a list of everything you want to tell your health care provider. If you do not speak English, take a friend, or family member who speaks English with you, or get an interpreter through the K-W Multicultural Centre (see contact details above).

Unfortunately there are not enough family doctors in Kitchener-Waterloo for all of the people living here. You may get help to find a health care provider from:

- **Healthcare Connect:** Health Care Connect assists you with your search for a family health care provider. You should have a valid OHIP card to be part of the program. Call 1-800-445-1822 to register yourself. After you've registered with Health Care Connect, a nurse - called a Care Connector - will be assigned to help you find a health care provider in your area
- Someone you know. A friend, a relative, or someone you work with might know a health care provider/family doctor who is taking new patients.
- Workers at a settlement office Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre

- Greater KW Chamber of Commerce (you can add your name to their list of people looking for a family physician, and new doctors in the area each receive this list)
- The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has a search feature on their website that allows you to see if there are doctors in your area who are accepting new patients.

Where can I go for medical help if I do not have my own health care provider?

There are *urgent care* medical clinics where people can go if they do not have health care providers/family doctors. Please call ahead to verify the hours they are open. You do not make appointments at these clinics, so everyone must wait until it is their turn to see the doctor. You may have to wait for several hours. When you arrive at the clinic you must sign in with the receptionist. If you think you need help immediately (e.g. shortness of breath, chest pain: make sure the receptionist knows. Please see the attached table for **Urgent Care Clinic** addresses in Kitchener-Waterloo, or for the **Weber Medical Centre**.

Hospitals - You may go to the hospital to have an operation, or surgery, or if you suddenly become very sick (have a lot of pain very suddenly, hurt in an accident, become unconscious, have difficulties breathing, have severe pain). In these situations you should go to the emergency department at the hospital: **Grand River Hospital or St. Mary's General Hospital**. Drive in your car or call a taxi (**Kitchener City Cabs – 519-747-7777; United Taxi – 519-888-9999; Waterloo Taxi – 519-886-1200**).

Emergencies - If you need medical help immediately phone **911** for an ambulance. Do not worry if you do not speak English. Stay on the phone and an ambulance will come. When you call 911, a fire truck and police car are also sent to your home. **Make sure you**

take your OHIP health card or the Interim Federal Health (IFH) form with you anytime you go for medical help.

Community Health Centres - Community health centres work with people, families and groups to make the community healthy. Family doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, community health workers and other health professionals work as team in community health centres. Community health centres do more than treat sick people. They work with people and groups in the community to preserve individual, family and community health. Some of the people they work with are: parents, seniors, youth, immigrants and refugees. The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre opened in November 2000 and works with newcomers in Kitchener-Waterloo. The Community Health Centre combines primary health care (provided by family physicians/doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, dieticians, foot care specialists, and counsellors) with health promotion, health education and illness prevention. The Health Centre serves people living in downtown Kitchener and also new Canadians who do not have a family doctor. The Health Centre can arrange interpretation services to help people who do not speak English. For more information see the address in the attached table.

The **Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre** also supports special programs that may help you. These are:

Community Health Helpers who speak different languages and come from different ethnocultural backgrounds. The Community Health Helpers are friendly, caring, community members from various ethnocultural communities who are trained to assist new Canadians and First Nations community members in a variety of health issues. Someone in this program may speak your native language and be able to help you with your health concerns or to understand the health care system in Canada. If you are interested in health you may want to help with this program. To contact a Community Health Helper who speaks your language call 519-745-4404.

Share the warmth: is a program that helps prevent homelessness by assisting with outstanding heating bills when people are in danger of service termination and/or eviction.

For more information call 519-745-4404.

The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre also provides administrative support to the **Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC)**, and works with other organizations to support the Coalition that addresses refugee and immigrant concerns. If you want to be a member of the Coalition, call 519-745-4404.

Public Health - Public Health Departments in Ontario work to improve the health of the public. They run different programs to improve the health of the Waterloo region residents. The **Waterloo Region Community Health Department** has programs for parents of babies and young children (as well as programs for youth and adults). These programs include:

- Breast Feeding and Baby Nutrition – 519-883-2002, ext. 5300
- Healthy Babies, Healthy Children – 519-883-2002
- Healthy Children Information Line – 519-883-2245
- Multicultural Child Health Infoline – 519-883-2002, ext. 5252 (information is provided in different languages)
- Child Immunization – 519-883 –2007, ext. 5273

The **Waterloo Region Health Department** also offers programs for:

- Communicable Diseases & Sexuality – 519-883-2006 or 883-2251
- Sexual/Reproductive Health – 519-883-2009
- Youth Health – 519-883-2003
- Environmental Health – 519-883-2008
- Food Safety & Infection Control – 519-883-2009 or 883-2005
- Immunization, if needed for travelling to some countries – 519-883-2007, ext. 5274
- Resource Centre (a library on health issues) – 519-883-2256

Dental Work: Is dental work covered by OHIP?

Dentists help you to have healthy teeth and gums. Most dentists work in private offices

or clinics. Dental care is expensive. OHIP only pays for dental work in a few exceptional situations. You must pay the cost of your dental work unless any of the following situations apply to you:

- You have dental coverage through your employment health plan.
- You receive social assistance (social assistance has limited coverage). If you are having a problem with your teeth and are on social assistance you may tell your caseworker that you need to go to the dentist. You must make an appointment with a dentist who has agreed to be paid by welfare.
- You are a child in school. Dental help for school age children may be available from: **Waterloo Region Community Health Department, Dental Health Services - 519-883-2001.**
- If you are a refugee claimant, the Interim Federal Health Program pays for some dental care (when you are in pain and need emergency treatment).

Eye Exams: Does OHIP cover eye examinations and eyeglasses?

OHIP will pay for an eye examination once every 12 months for people over 65 and under 20. If you are 20 to 64 years old and you have a medical condition affecting your eye, OHIP will cover the cost of your eye examination once a year. OHIP does not help with the cost of buying eyeglasses. Some help is available to you if you are on social assistance. Speak with your caseworker.

Medications and the Pharmacy: Who pays for medication?

- A pharmacy is also called a drug store. It is a place where you go to buy prescription medicine and over-the-counter medicine.
- Prescription medication is sold only at a pharmacy. Only doctors, nurse practitioners and dentists can write prescriptions for medication.
- You can find over-the-counter medicines on the shelf at a store. You do not need a

prescription to buy them.

- OHIP does not pay for prescriptions. OHIP pays only when you are in a hospital.
- If you are a refugee claimant, the Interim Federal Health Program pays for most prescription medicines.
- The Ontario Drug Benefit Program (ODB) helps seniors over 65 years of age; people who get social assistance or Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP); and people in nursing homes in special care.
- You may get a benefit plan paid for by your employer. Check with your employer.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Anyone can get Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). STIs spread through sexual contact. They can cause severe sickness and sterility. STIs like Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS are deadly.

The **Waterloo Region Community Health Department** has a drop-in clinic. Call Sexual/Reproductive Health – 519-883-2009 for clinic hours or to make an appointment.

The AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Area (ACCKWA) is a community-based, non-profit agency that addresses the needs of individuals infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. ACCKWA provides education and information for the public as well as immediate crisis counselling to individuals. Information you share with the worker is completely confidential.

Mental health: Stress, depression and other life issues

Mental health is about how you cope in society, how you feel emotionally, and how you deal with stress. Depression is also a common mental health issue. As a newcomer you may deal with a lot of stress. Any person who moves to a new country experiences many changes in their life. You have left family, friends, work, and your home. At different times in Canada you may feel homesick, lonely, or sad. It is also hard to adapt to new laws, climate and food; learn a new language, find a job without Canadian experience, adapt to the different roles for women and men, understand when children want to do things in a new

way and parents want to keep traditions. These are normal feelings. When you feel this way, it can be important to get out of your house to visit, talk, and be with other people, even when you do not feel like doing that. It can be helpful to talk to other people who may be feeling the same things or to people who will understand what you are feeling.

Often the feelings a person has are a response to difficult experiences that they have had. An adult, child, or youth may have lived through war, the stress of a refugee camp or other difficult experiences. You may also be concerned about family or friends who remain in a difficult situation. These experiences and feelings can result in *trauma*. This is a normal human reaction to difficult memories and experiences.

Sometimes the feelings someone has are so strong, or continue for so long that they can affect your health. It is very important to seek help at these times. Asking for support at these times is the sign of a very strong person. You need to decide what help you think will be useful to you or your family member. There are different places where you can begin looking for support:

- Your health care provider/family doctor. Talk to your health care provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, registered nurse) if you are suffering from stress or depression and he/she will be able to help you.
- **The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**. The CMHA also has a library of resources on different mental health issues, including the effects of war experiences, torture, and refugeeism
- A settlement agency
- A counselling centre
- A religious leader

There are special community supports for children who are experiencing trauma. For more information contact:

- **Catholic Family Counselling Centre**
- **K-W Counselling Services**
- **Interfaith Counselling**

What makes my appointment with a health care provider work better?

In order to better communicate with your health care providers: doctor, nurse practitioner, or nurses and other health care providers, you need to be prepared. You may need to spend time before you visit the doctor or other health care provider. To prepare for the appointment it is always helpful to keep record of any changes, medications and appointments. Prepare answers to the following questions:

- What are your symptoms?
- When did they start?
- Have you experienced any lifestyle changes recently? For example: moved house, serious illness, or family problems.

Communication with your health care professionals helps them prescribe and treat your individual problem, so share any information you have.

When your health care professional is talking, take notes and listen carefully. Ask questions. Often you feel rushed. Do not leave until you are satisfied with your answers. Remember, it may not be possible to address all of your concerns during one visit. Be prepared to go back if you have further questions or changes in your symptoms.

Note:

This section is not intended to provide all available information about health organizations, and what kinds of support they may offer. The purpose is simply to tell people where to start when they need help with their health. When people contact the resources or organizations mentioned in the guide, they will find more organizations that will support them for their health.

The guide is not complete as there are many organizations that provide health related services and programs in Kitchener-Waterloo. Those organizations mentioned in the guide are just some of the many places newcomers can get help for health. There are many other alternative and auxiliary health related services not listed in the guide: massage therapists, chiropractors, homeopaths, psychotherapists, traditional healers, etc. The best way to proceed is to consult your doctor, nurse, or other health professional first, and then find out

about the condition and treatment options available for your health.

Housing

Housing

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Bell Canada 519-310-2355	Conestoga Mall or Fairview Mall www.bell.ca	7C; 7 Fairview Mall
Anselma House 24 hour crisis line: 519-742-5894 Toll Free 1-877-419-1517	Address Not Available www.wcswr.org	
Central Ontario Co-operative Housing Federation 519-579-2424	29 King Street East, Suite 2 Kitchener www.cochf.coop	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Haven House 24 hour crisis line: 519-653-2422 Toll Free 1-800-410-4482	Address Not Available www.wcswr.org	
House of Friendship – Men’s Hostel 519-742-8327	63 Charles St. East (near Benton St.) Kitchener www.houseoffriendship.org	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region 519-571-6788	127 Victoria Street South, Suite 201 Kitchener www.ilcwr.org	19 Victoria South; 20 Victoria Hills
Kitchener Housing 519-744-6655	11 Weber St. West Kitchener www.kitchener.ca/khi/home.html	Walking distance from the bus terminal
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-741-2351	102 King St. West Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro 519-743-3600	301 Victoria St. South Kitchener www.kwhydro.ca	19 Victoria South; 20 Victoria Hills
Lutherwood-CODA 519-743-2460 Safe Haven 519-749-1450	165 King St. East Kitchener www.lutherwood.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal

Housing (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Mary's Place, YWCA 519-744-0120	84 Frederick St. Kitchener www.ywcakw.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Salvation Army 519-578-4800 519-584-1818	1436 Victoria St. North 563 Highland Rd. W. Kitchener	15 Frederick; 24 Highland
Waterloo North Hydro Billing: 519-885-6840 Operations: 519.888.5577	300 Northfield Dr. East Waterloo www.wnhydro.com	7C (to Conestoga Mall), 5 from the mall (only during rush hour)
Waterloo Region Community Housing 519-575-4833	385 Fairway Rd. S., Suite 201 Kitchener www.region.waterloo.on.ca	7 Fairview Mall
Waterloo Region Community Legal Services 519-743-0254	170 Victoria St. South Kitchener www.wrcls.ca	19 Victoria South; 20 Victoria Hills
Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health 519-742-3191	618 King St. West Kitchener www.waterlooregionalhomes.com	7 (C, D, E)
The Working Centre, Housing Desk 519-743-1151	58 Queen St. South Kitchener www.theworkingcentre.org	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Worth a Second Look 519-569-7566	97 Victoria St. N. (near Weber St.) Kitchener www.theworkingcentre.org	Walking distance from downtown; 18 Guelph Street
YMCA, Cross-Cultural and Community Services 519-579-9622	800 King St. West, 3 rd floor Kitchener www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/immigrant.asp	7 (C, D, E)

I need a good place to live. What should I do?

A good place to live is very important. It may take time to find a good apartment because Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge do not have enough apartments for low rent.

I have questions about looking for an apartment. Who can help me?

Offices where you can get advice about looking for an apartment are:

- **Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**
- **Kitchener Housing**
- **Lutherwood- CODA** (for young people ages 16-24)
- **Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support** (for refugee claimants)
- **Independent Living Centre** (for adults with a physical disability)
- **The Working Centre - Housing Desk**

What questions should I ask when I look for an apartment?

What rent can I afford? Social service experts recommend that you not pay more than 30% of your monthly income for rent. If you pay more, you may be using money you need for food or transportation. If you are on welfare or working for a low wage, it will be hard to find an apartment you can afford. If you are a single person you may want to share an apartment with a friend. Some single men and women live in *rooming houses* with other single people. Rooming houses can be noisy and uncomfortable.

How do I find an apartment? The K-W Record newspaper advertises apartments for rent. You can ask your friends or other people you know for their suggestions. If you know where in the city you want to live, you can walk or drive around the area. You may find signs in front of buildings advertising "apartment for rent." Usually, you will have to phone and make an appointment if you want to look at an apartment. You may have to make many phone calls and visit different apartments before you find the place

you want. It is also important to find out how close it is to buses, shopping, schools and other services you may need.

How much is my rent? Often the rent for an apartment is *inclusive*. This means you do not pay additional charges for electricity, heat, or parking. Other apartments charge extra money for *heat and hydro* (electricity). Ask how much this will cost each month (before you sign a lease you can ask an office to help you find out how much heat and hydro will cost). If you pay for your own heating, AVOID places that use *electric heat* because it is very expensive!

I found an apartment. What do I do now?

Do I have to sign a lease and give the superintendent "post-dated" cheques? Not everybody wants to sign a *lease* because this means you cannot change apartments until your lease is finished. Usually a lease is for one year. You may be asked to sign a "housing agreement" and to give the landlord a cheque for two months rent before you even know if you can live there. This is legal although the date you write on your cheque should be one week or two weeks in the future. You should ask for this cheque back if you are not given the apartment. A landlord will often do a *credit check*. This means that they will contact a Credit Bureau, which tracks your history of borrowing (loans, credit cards, store-specific credit cards) to see if you pay your bills on time on you before they will rent to you.

If you are on social assistance, you must get the approval of your case worker before you rent any apartment. If you have applied for subsidised housing, let the proper office know your new address so that you can be contacted when a place becomes available.

Do I have to pay a rent deposit (or "last month's rent")? Many places ask for an extra month's rent if you want the apartment. This is called a "rent deposit." It is legal. It is very important for you to make sure you are given a receipt to show that you have paid this, and to keep this receipt until you move from the building. When you move remember that your last month's rent is already paid. Do not pay it again. When you move, your landlord must pay you interest on the deposit you paid (this may not be very much money). You will probably have to remind your landlord that you are owed this interest on your deposit.

If you have just come to Canada and you are applying for welfare, you can ask your welfare worker for help with the rent deposit.

How do I get repairs made in the apartment before I move in? An apartment may have a cracked window, broken stove, dirty carpet, or other problems you want fixed. You should talk about these problems before you move in. Some problems should be fixed before you agree to move into the apartment. You may agree to take an apartment if the landlord agrees to make repairs before you move in. It is important to have this agreement in writing. Only pay rent from the day you start living in the apartment.

Can I get help to find furniture? If you are applying for welfare after coming to Canada, you can ask your worker for help to buy beds. There are many stores where you can buy used furniture for less money, such as:

- **Worth a Second Look**
- **Salvation Army**
- **Value Village**

You can ask these stores if they will deliver the furniture and if they charge for this service.

How do I get phone service? Land line phone service is provided by a company called *Bell Canada*. Bell has offices in Conestoga Mall (bus 7C) and Fairview Mall (buses 7, 7A, 7B). You can call, or go to these offices and complete an application. You may be asked to pay a deposit (maybe \$200) or to have a friend sign your application. Bell must return your deposit (with interest) after you have fully paid six consecutive phone bills. Call Bell if you do not receive your refund on time.

Another phone service option is a cell phone. Several companies offer phone plans. It is a good idea to shop around before choosing which plan to sign up for, because the costs vary greatly from one plan to the next.

What about long-distance phone calls? This can be very expensive. You can end up with a very large bill very quickly. Bell may cancel your phone service if you do not pay your bill. You can purchase long-distance *phone cards*. These can be purchased in many stores.

What is public or subsidized housing?

The government rents some apartments and townhouses where you can receive a *rent subsidy*. This means that the less money you have, the less rent you pay. You must apply to live in these buildings. It is important to apply as soon as you arrive in Kitchener-Waterloo because many people are waiting to live in these places (on *waiting lists*). You can also apply for special housing or a rent subsidy if you are 65 years or older or if you have a physical or mental disability. To apply for subsidized housing go to:

- **Kitchener Housing**
- **Waterloo Region Community Housing**

What other housing options do I have?

Housing Co-operatives (co-ops) are townhouse or apartment complexes that are not owned by the government or a landlord. Co-operatives have special rules and applications. People who live in co-ops are called members and all the members are responsible for operating the co-op. You must contact each co-operative separately. The **Central Ontario Co-operative Housing Federation** (www.cochf.coop) has a listing of current co-op vacancies on their website. You could also ask the K-W Multicultural Centre or the Community Information Centre for more information.

Buying a house is not possible until you have thousands of dollars for a down payment. Ask the **K-W Multicultural Centre** where you can go to get more information about home buying and how to plan and budget to buy a house.

I need a place to stay immediately!

If you have arrived in the city and have no place to live or if you have had to leave your apartment suddenly, there are *emergency shelters* where you can go for help:

- **Mary's Place, YWCA** – Families and single women
- **House of Friendship** - men and boys 16 years and older

If you are a woman (with or without children) who must leave your home because of

abuse, you can go to **Anselma House** or **Haven House**. Call a taxi or get on a bus and say you need to go to a shelter. Do not worry if you do not have money with you.

What can I do if people will not rent to me because I am on welfare or because of how I look or speak? What can I do if my landlord is not respecting my rights as a tenant?

It is against Canadian human rights law to be refused housing because you are on welfare or because someone does not like the way you look or speak. Some people, however, may discriminate against you. You can ask for advice about this. The **K-W Multicultural Centre** or the **Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support** (for refugee claimants) will assist you.

You have both rights and responsibilities as a *tenant* (someone who rents the place where they are living). It can be important to know the rights and responsibilities of a tenant. To read more about your rights as a tenant, www.ontariotenants.ca is a useful website.

For more information or help on these questions contact:

- **Waterloo Region Community Legal Services** (you can get free legal advice from this office if you cannot afford a lawyer. Call for an appointment.)
- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

Do I have to tell my landlord when I want to change my apartment?

You can move from your apartment, but there are some things you should know. If you have signed a lease, the law says you cannot move until your lease is finished (unless your landlord gives you a letter saying you can move). Anytime you move, even if you do not have a lease, you must *give notice*. This means that you must give your landlord a written letter two months before you plan to move. (Example: If you are going to move on June 1, you must give your landlord or superintendent a letter on April 1.)

Remember that if you paid a rent deposit, you do not have to pay rent for your last month. If you do not *give notice*, however, you lose your deposit.

How can I get my mail at my new address? What other things should I do when I move?

When you move you will want to make sure that your mail goes to your new home. You can go to a post office outlet and complete a *change of address* form. This costs money and lasts four months. You will need to give your new address to your friends, bank, and any other places that send you mail.

Call the phone company (Bell) and tell them you are moving. You may be given a new phone number even if you are only moving from Kitchener to Waterloo.

If you pay your own heat and hydro you need to go to the office of the utility company to cancel service at your old apartment beginning the day after you move. If you are paying heat and hydro in your new apartment, you will need to set up an account before you move.

- **Kitchener Wilmot Hydro**
- **Waterloo North Hydro**

Immigration and Citizenship

Immigration and Citizenship

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
K-W English School 519-886-3300	800 King Street W. Kitchener ace.wrdsb.on.ca	7(C, D, E)
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support 519-571-1912	58 Queen St. S. (in The Working Centre) Kitchener www.mcrs.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Ontario Legal Aid 519-743-4306	50 Queen St. North, 8 th Floor Kitchener www.legalaid.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Passport Canada Office 1-800-567-6868	40 Weber St. East, Mezzanine Level Kitchener www.ppt.gc.ca.	Walking distance from the bus terminal
St Louis Adult Learning Centre 519-745-1201 (downtown location)	80 Young Street Kitchener stlouis.wcdsb.edu.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Waterloo-Wellington Citizenship and Immigration Centre Call Centre: 1-888-242-2100	29 Duke St. East Kitchener www.cic.gc.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services 519-579-9622	800 King St. West 3 rd floor Kitchener www.kwymca.org	7 (C, D, E)

What is my immigration status in Canada?

Categories of Immigrants and Refugees: People come to Canada in different ways. Those who choose to come in a planned way for a better life, or be with their family, or for economic reasons are referred to as immigrants. The different immigrant categories are:

- **Independent:** assessed on a “point system” according to various criteria such as ability to speak English or French; age; education; occupation, etc.
- **Investor:** specific level of income (\$500, 000) and willing to invest in private or government business ventures.
- **Entrepreneur:** specific level of income (\$250,000) and willing to start their own business which will employ at least one Canadian or landed immigrant (other than family).

On the other hand, those who do not voluntarily leave their native country are known as **Refugees**. As defined by international law, refugees are persons who are outside their country of nationality; have a well founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; and are unable or, owing to that fear, unwilling to return their country of origin. Refugees can be divided into three categories:

Refugee Claimant: those seeking protection either from within Canada or at a port of entry. A refugee claimant is someone who makes a claim to be a refugee. The Immigration and Refugee Board is an administrative tribunal that determines or reviews all claims of convention refugee status made in Canada. If the claim is accepted, the applicant and immediate family members may apply for permanent residency status.

Convention Refugees: Sponsored privately by groups (of five or more people), churches, community organizations, or by the federal government, or they came on their own, claimed refugee status, and had their case accepted at an Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) hearing.

Refugees with Minister's Permit: A Minister's Permit is a document that allows a person who does not meet immigration requirements either as a visitor or an immigrant to

enter or remain in Canada. This is a special permission granted to people because of particular reasons and circumstances to enter or remain in Canada for a specified period of time

Landed Immigrant: This is a general term used for a person who has been granted landing but has not become a Canadian citizen. The current official term for this status is “permanent resident”.

Visitor: a visitor is a person who is visiting Canada or seeking to come into Canada for a temporary purpose. People who come to visit their family and friends, students, temporary workers and tourists are included in this category.

Where can I go for help about immigration or refugee questions?

- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**
- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Waterloo-Wellington Citizenship and Immigration Centre**

For information about the refugee claim process contact:

- **The Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support**

Where can I find help settling in Kitchener-Waterloo?

If you are new in Canada or in Kitchener-Waterloo you may want information or practical support to help you settle in this community. You may also want to contact people from your country of origin or who speak your first language. For more information contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Communication Services**

Can I bring my family or relatives to Canada?

You can apply to bring some family members to Canada, including children under 19 years old, your husband or wife, your fiancé/ fiancée, and your parents. You can bring some other relatives in special circumstances. There are rules about when and how you can assist

someone. This may depend on your immigration status, your financial situation, and the health of your family member. It can take the Canadian Immigration Department a long time to approve your application and sometimes they say "no". The application costs money. You also must promise to financially support your family member for up to ten years. It is important to get good advice before you send your application to Immigration.

I came to Canada without my spouse and (some of) my children. Can I sponsor them to come to Canada?

Sometimes refugees (including people who were refugee claimants) must come to Canada without their spouse or all of their children. You may have special rights to bring your spouse to Canada, but only for a certain period of time. You should get some advice as soon as possible at the **Waterloo-Wellington Citizenship and Immigration Centre**.

Can an organization or non-relatives help me bring my family member to Canada?

Organizations (for example, churches or mosques or other faith organizations that have permission from Immigration) or groups of 5 people can use *private sponsorship* to bring people to Canada. The government must agree that the people who are sponsored are refugees or are in danger in their own country. For more information contact:

- **Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**
- **K-W Multicultural Centre**

Do I need the help of a lawyer or immigration consultant?

A lawyer has formal training, must belong to a formal association, and can represent clients in court. Immigration consultants may or may not have formal training, and they also must register with a professional association. Be careful when you pick your lawyer or consultant.

You do not always need a lawyer or immigration consultant to complete an immigration application or to get good advice. You may be able to complete your application by yourself

or with the help of a community agency. Sometimes you may want or need a lawyer or consultant. Lawyers and consultants can cost a lot of money. Make sure you know how much they will cost. You may want to ask for help finding a lawyer or consultant. No lawyer or consultant or agency can guarantee that your application will be successful.

Can I get financial help to pay a lawyer?

In some situations you can ask the Ontario government for help to pay a lawyer (Legal Aid cannot help you pay a consultant). You can apply for Legal Aid if you are making a refugee claim. You can apply if your application to sponsor your spouse or children has been refused. You can sometimes file for a humanitarian application. In some cases your legal aid application may not succeed. You can apply at **Ontario Legal Aid**.

Can I get help with my immigration case from my Member of Parliament?

Your Member of Parliament (MP) represents the part of the city where you live in the Government of Canada (called the House of Commons). Your MP has a local office and workers who can help you contact the Immigration Department if you have questions about your immigration file.

You can go to your MP's office without an appointment during the hours it is open. You have to make an appointment if you want to speak directly with your MP. To find out who is your MP, contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

Can I leave Canada if I am not a Canadian citizen? When can I get a Canadian passport?

You can leave and return to Canada if you are a permanent resident. You must accumulate two years of physical presence in Canada for every five year period. Before leaving for an extended period of time, talk to an Immigration officer first. Ask for a *Permanent Resident Card*.

You cannot get a Canadian passport until you are a citizen but you can apply for a *Permanent Resident Card* to help you travel to and through other countries. The wait time for this card may be long. When you travel, make sure you take your *Permanent Resident Card* with you. Keep it in a safe place. You will need it to re-enter Canada if you are aboard a commercial use vehicle (airplane, bus, train, boat). Applications for a Canadian passport or travel document are available from the **Passport Office**.

What do I do if I lose my Permanent Resident Card?

It is important to keep your immigration and citizenship documents in a safe place. It is also helpful to make photocopies of your documents and keep them in a different, safe place. If your *Permanent Resident Card* is lost or stolen, you must pay a fee to Immigration and apply for a limited use temporary travel document.

How do I become a Canadian citizen?

You can apply to become a Canadian citizen 3 years after you become a permanent resident (this time may be different from the length of time you've lived in Canada if you became a permanent resident after you came to Canada). First, you must pass an examination to be accepted. To prepare for the examination you can contact:

- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**
- **St Louis Adult Education Centre**
- **K-W English School**

To apply for citizenship go to:

- **Waterloo-Wellington Citizenship and Immigration Centre**

Interpretation and Translation

Interpretation and Translation

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services 519-579-9622	800 King St. West, 3 rd floor Kitchener, www.kwymca.org	7 (C, D, E)

Where can I look for help if I need an interpreter?

You may want someone's help interpreting when you are speaking with your doctor, caseworker, child's teacher, or in other situations. You may have relatives, friends or children who help you when they can. Perhaps your friends and family ask you to be an interpreter. This informal help is very important but sometimes it is necessary or more comfortable for people to use formal interpreters.

Formal interpreters have been trained to interpret accurately and to respect your privacy. If you need an interpreter, call and ask if you will have to pay for this service. In some situations the cost of the interpreter may be paid by the agency that is asking to speak with you. You cannot phone and ask to have an interpreter immediately. You need to call several days or a week before. For more information contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

Can I help people by being an interpreter?

If you are interested in receiving formal training to become a cultural interpreter, contact the **K-W Multicultural Centre**.

Where can I go to have my written documents translated?

If you need a certified (formal) translation from another language into English, you must

go to a person or agency that has a licence to do formal translations. You will be expected to pay for a certified translation. For more information or to find a certified translator, contact the **K-W Multicultural Centre**.

Are there special requirements to have my academic/educational document translated?

You must contact the educational institution or professional organization needing your document to find out what procedures they require for a properly translated document. (For more information about this, read the **Employment** section of this guide.)

A translation of official documents that you submit to a government office or many other agencies must be accompanied by an *affidavit*. This is a written document signed by the translator and validated ("notarized") by a notary public. A translator states that he or she is fully proficient in both languages and takes responsibility for the accuracy of the translation. You can get a document notarized at the **K-W Multicultural Centre**.

Before you pay for a translation, check it for accuracy. Discuss any questions or concerns with the translator. Every detail of translation is important, including spelling and proper names of organizations.

Parenting

Parenting

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Breastfeeding Buddies Peer Support (for pregnant and breastfeeding women) 519-745-4404 ext. 250	59 Frederick St., Kitchener (Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre)	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Catholic Family Counselling Centre 519-743-6333	400 Queen St. South Kitchener www.cfcchelps.ca	25 Queen
ChildCare Connection 519-741-1811	1770 King St. East, Suite 5 Kitchener www.ccnds.on.ca	7B Fairview Mall via Weber
Community Information Centre of Waterloo Region 519-579-3800	151 Frederick St. 3 rd floor Kitchener www.waterlooregion.org/cic	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Cradlelink 519-749-0977	165 King St. E., Kitchener (across from Market Square) www.lutherwood.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region 519-576-0540	200 Ardelt Ave Kitchener www.facswaterloo.org	3 Ottawa South
Growing Up Downtown 519-745-4404 ext. 209	59 Frederick St., Kitchener (Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre)	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Healthy Children Info Line 519-883-2245	99 Regina St. South Waterloo www.region.waterloo.on.ca	7 (C, D, E)
Infant Development Program, Region of Waterloo 519-883-2268	Call for more information	
Interfaith Institute for Couples and Families 519-884-0000	480 Charles St. E. Kitchener www.interfaithmft.on.ca	7 (A, B, F)

Parenting (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Kitchener Public Library 519-743-0271	85 Queen St. N. Kitchener (Main Branch) www.kpl.org	Walking distance from the bus terminal
K-W Counselling Services 519-884-0000	480 Charles St. E., Kitchener www.kwcounselling.com	7 (A, B, F)
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West, downtown Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
La Leche League Canada, Kitchener-Waterloo 519-579-3800	Call for more information www.lalecheleaguecanada.ca	
Lutherwood-CODA Youth Employment Centre 519-743-2460	165 King St. E., Kitchener (across from Market Square) www.lutherwood.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Ontario Early Years Centres Our Place 519-571-1626	Our Place: 154 Gatewood Rd., Kitchener www.ourplacekw.ca	Our Place: 25 Queen South
Kitchener-Waterloo 519-741-8585	K-W: 425 University Ave. E. Unit Q, Waterloo www.earlyyearsinfo.ca	K-W: Call to enquire
Cambridge 519-740-8353	Cambridge: 149 Ainslie St., N., Cambridge www.cfeyc.ca	Cambridge: Call to enquire
Waterloo Public Library 519-886-1310	35 Albert St., Waterloo www.wpl.ca	7 (C, D, E)
Waterloo Region Social Services 519-883-2195 Child Care Subsidy 519-883-2200 Home Child Care Program 519-883-2200	99 Regina St. South, Waterloo www.region.waterloo.on.ca	7 (C, D, E)

Parenting (Continued)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services 519-579-9622	800 King St. W., 3 rd floor Kitchener www.kwymca.org	Cross-Cultural: 7 (C, D, E)
A.R. Kaufman Branch 519-743-5201	333 Carwood Dr., Kitchener	A.R. Kaufman: 8 Fairview via Courtland
RIM Park Branch 519-884-9622	2001 University Ave. Waterloo	RIM: call to enquire

Is being a parent different in Canada?

There will be small or big differences between parenting in Canada and in your native country. These differences can be about the school system, government support for families, recreation opportunities for children, social expectations of what youth can or cannot do, and even laws about the rights of parents and children. You may begin to depend on your child to translate for you, and this can be very uncomfortable. Your situation is also different because you have left the support of many family, friends, and neighbours.

You may feel good about some differences here in Canada. You may feel confused, frustrated, or even angry about other changes. These feelings are understandable. You care about your children and you want what is best for them and for your whole family.

Being a parent is not always easy. Every family has different specific needs but all parents and families need to feel that they have support. There are different places where you may want to look for this support in K-W. Some of these appear in the organizations listed for this section.

Does Canadian law let me discipline my child?

Parents can and are expected to discipline their children in Canada. Canadian law, however, says that certain forms of discipline are not allowed. For example, it is against the

law to use much physical force against your child. You are allowed to spank your child very lightly but anything harder can be called physical abuse. This is considered a crime, and the police and **Family and Children's Services** must investigate any report they receive about possible abuse.

You may believe that physically disciplining your child is your responsibility as a parent and an important way of teaching your child what is right and wrong. You may sometimes hit your children when you are frustrated, even though you love and care for them. The laws in Canada may confuse and frighten you. It can be very important and helpful for you to understand what rights and responsibilities both parents and children have in Canada under the law. You may want to talk about how parents can teach and discipline their children without using physical force. You may need to find a place or a person where you feel safe to ask these questions. You might do this in a group with other parents or you may want to do this alone with one other person.

You can begin to look for information and support as a parent by going to:

- **K-W Counselling Services**
- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Ontario Early Years Centres**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

Where can I go with my child to meet other parents (mothers or fathers) and their children?

Many parents take their children to the park or to the schoolyard to play. It is acceptable in Canadian society to speak to strangers although other parents may react to you in a more or less friendly way.

What programs are in my neighbourhood?

The **Ontario Early Years Centres** have many free programs designed for parents and children age 0-6 years of age.

The **Kitchener Public Library** and the **Waterloo Public Library** offer several free

programs for parents and children, as well as free access to books, videos, and other resources. The main branches are centrally located, and there may be a library branch close to your neighbourhood.

Your neighbourhood may have a *community centre* or *neighbourhood association* with special programs for children and parents (local churches might also have parent-child programs). These programs are for anyone who lives in the neighbourhood. They may be free or cost a small amount. Usually you must stay in the building with your child although there may be special programs or activities for the adults, such as English classes or guest speakers. For more information read the "Socialization" section of this guide, ask a neighbour, or phone the **Community Information Centre**.

What programs are outside my neighbourhood?

There are different community programs for parents and children. These programs may have information on a child's physical and mental development, activities for children, information about Canadian law, and a place for parents to share ideas about parenting. These programs may also have libraries where you can borrow books, videos, and toys for your children. These services are often free and the programs may be able to help you with bus tickets. You can ask what help each program offers.

- **A.R. Kaufman YMCA or Waterloo YMCA**
- **Catholic Family Counselling Centre of Waterloo Region**
- **Growing Up Downtown**
- **K-W Counselling Services**
- **Live and Learn Program, House of Friendship**
- **Ontario Early Years Centres**
- **Our Place – Kitchener Early Years Centre** (Our Place makes a special effort to welcome new Canadian parents)
- **Healthy Babies, Healthy Children**

My teenaged children are looking for some support in their education or in looking for work. Where can they go for support?

Information and support to teenagers and young people between the ages of 16 to 24 years is available at:

- **Local high schools**
- **Lutherwood-CODA Youth Employment Services**

I have a child under one year of age. There is stress in my life. Is there help I can receive at home?

The **Healthy Children's Info Line** is a good resource to use to connect to services offered in the area, including home support visits through the **Healthy Babies, Healthy Children** program.

One community program called **Cradlelink** provides a little support to parents who have stress in their lives. There can be one or two parents at home. A person will come to your home for a few hours each month to provide parents with some relief and support. To ask for this support you must contact **Cradlelink**.

Who can I talk to about breastfeeding?

If you are interested in discussing questions, concerns, and / or sharing knowledge about breastfeeding your child, support is available through:

- **Breastfeeding Buddies Peer Support** (one-on-one support for pregnant and breastfeeding women)
- **La Leche League** (group discussion and some one-on-one support for pregnant and breastfeeding women)

How do I allow my child to be comfortable in Canadian society without losing our family values, language, and traditions?

As a parent you want to teach and give your child what he or she needs to grow up well.

You may want your child to have friends and to be comfortable in Canadian society. You also may want to them to learn the values that you feel are important and to keep your native language, religion, and traditions. You may feel that your child is becoming too Canadian. Your child may feel that you will not let them be Canadian. This is difficult for any family. You may want to discuss these issues with other parents, with your child's teachers, or with people from some of the organizations listed in this section.

Will my child's education be harmed if we do not speak English at home?

People who have studied this question say that your child will learn English more easily and better, if they have also learned to speak, read, and write well in the language of their parents. You are helping your child, then if you speak and read with them in your first language, even if your child does not appear to enjoy this. Using your first language can also be very important to share feelings, teach values, and to help your children become adults.

Can my children go to school to learn our native language?

There are some Heritage Language / International Language programs and schools in K-W. Classes are held outside of your child's regular school program. If there are no Heritage Language classes in your native language, you may want to talk to other parents about starting a program. For more information contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

Can I speak to my child's teacher or the school principal?

You can ask to speak to your child's teacher at any time. You do not have to wait for the teacher to call you or for a parent-teacher night. You may expect your child's teacher to call you if your child is having difficulty in school but this may not happen. It may be necessary for you to find out how your child is doing at school and to contact the school if you feel there is a problem. You may want to take an interpreter with you or ask the school to arrange for an adult interpreter.

Should I be involved in my child's education?

Parents in Canada are encouraged to be involved in their child's education. This involvement may be different (more or less) than what is familiar to you. It may be helpful for you to meet with other parents to discuss how you can and want to be involved in your child's school.

What is the school Parent Council?

Each school should have a Parent Council. These councils are to encourage parent involvement in a school, and each one may do this in a different way. You can find out more about the Parent Council at your child's school by asking for the name and phone number of the parent in charge of the council.

Can I volunteer to help at my child's school?

Schools are often looking for parents to help in their child's school. You may be able to help tutor other children, help in the school library, or help in your child's classroom. This may depend on what interests you, how comfortable you are with English, and the activities offered at the school. Volunteering at your child's school may be a good way to be more involved in your child's education, to meet other parents and teachers, or to practice your English.

I have young children but I need to work. Who will look after my children?

You may need to look for someone outside your family to help look after your child if you must go to school or work. Finding childcare or a babysitter that you trust can be difficult and also expensive. Talking to other parents, neighbours, and some of the organizations listed in this section can be helpful.

Can I receive childcare help through Waterloo Region Social Services?

Social Services has a special department where you can apply for different kinds of

childcare help.

- You can ask the office to arrange and pay for your child to be cared for in someone's home or in a childcare centre. You must ask if you are eligible and for how many hours a week
- You can ask for a *childcare subsidy* – Social Assistance may pay for part of the cost of your childcare but you must use places approved by this office. Your child must be 10 years or younger (or up to 12 years in special circumstances). Call to make an appointment at the **Waterloo Region Social Services Department, Child Care Program.**
- If you are on social assistance and on a placement through the Ontario Works program, you can ask your caseworker about getting help with childcare.

Where else can I go for help finding childcare?

Childcare can be formal or informal. *Formal childcare* means that a centre or home is registered with the government. *Informal childcare* places are people's homes and they are not registered with the government. If you are paying for your own childcare you can decide whether you want to use a formal or informal place. You can get information about these different choices from **Child Care Connection**

Can I become a childcare provider for other parents?

To find out about providing childcare in your home, contact:

- **Child Care Connection**
- **K-W Multicultural Centre**

Are there private places where I can speak about problems in my family?

There may be times when you find that you are having difficulties in your family that you cannot solve on your own or with the help of friends or family. Maybe you are concerned that your children do not respect you. You and your spouse may find that you are arguing often. Perhaps you are concerned about the behaviour of a teenaged child. These are very

personal issues but they can be the normal problems of any family.

You may have tried different ways to make the situation better but feel this has not worked. You may be interested in speaking privately to a trained person who may be able to help you understand why these things are happening and what action you might take. The offices that provide this help may charge some money for their services. You can ask for help with interpretation into your first language.

- **Catholic Family Counselling Centre**
- **Interfaith Counselling Centre**
- **K-W Counselling Services**

I cannot find the type of parenting program or support I want. Can I start a new program or support?

You can initiate and start your own group. If you need advice on how to do this contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Community Information Centre**

My child has special needs. Are there places where I can find support for my child and for myself as a parent?

Some children (as well as adults) have physical or mental situations that require specialized support. These may involve problems with hearing, vision, physical mobility, learning disabilities, and so on. Families who are providing support to children, teenagers, or young adults with special needs also need support in doing this.

There are many different community groups and agencies that offer various types of support and services to children and families depending on their circumstances. To learn what support is available for you and your child talk to a settlement agency or contact:

- **Community Information Centre**
- **Infant Development Program – Region of Waterloo:** Family-centered early intervention services for children birth to 5 years at risk for developmental delay

Sexual Orientation:

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer Supports

Sexual Orientation: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer Supports

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Among Friends Program 519 Church St. Community Centre Project contact: 416-324-8619 x 290	www.the519.org/includes/among_friends.shtml	TORONTO
GLOBAL (Gays, Lesbians, or Bisexuals at Laurier) 519-884-7337	75 University Ave. West Waterloo www.wlu.ca/global	7 U
GLOW (Gays and Lesbians of Waterloo): 519-884-4569	200 University Ave. West Waterloo www.glow.uwaterloo.ca	7U
Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre 519-571-0121 24 hour hotline: 519-741-8633	201-151 Frederick St. Kitchener www.kwsasc.org	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Lesbian Gay Bi Youth Line 1-800-268-YOUTH	www.youthline.ca	
Lesbian Moms and Tots at Our Place 519-571-1626	154 Gatewood Rd. Kitchener www.ourplacekw.ca	25 Queen South
OK2BME Project of K-W Counselling & Family and Children's Services 519-884-0000 ext. 212	www.kwcounselling.com/lgbtq/links.html	
PFLAG - Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Bi, Trans, Intersex, Queer and Questioning too) 519-742-0700	www.pflag.ca	

Canadian law respects the rights of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ). Under the Canadian Human Rights Act, discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation is prohibited. Same sex couples have the right to

be legally married in Canada. Several local organizations have programs and support groups for members of the LGBTQ community and also for their parents and friends.

Where can I go to talk about my experience as a lesbian / gay / bisexual / trans / queer (LGBTQ) individual?

GLOBAL (Gays, Lesbians, or Bisexual at Laurier): GLOBAL is Wilfrid Laurier University's student and alumni LGBT service organization. Global provides peer counselling, education, community support and advocacy, events, discussion nights and general information.

GLOW (Gays and Lesbians of Waterloo): Provides peer counselling, education, queer library, community support and advocacy, a student housing registry, events, discussion nights and general information.

Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre: The Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre is a feminist non-profit organization. They work to end sexual violence against women and children and to support female survivors and their families in Waterloo Region.

They offer individual and group counselling, advocacy and accompaniments, a 24-hour crisis line (519.741.8633) public education and a volunteer program. For information and services specific to the LGBTQ community, please visit <http://www.kwsasc.org/resources/lgbtqlinks.html>

Is there a group where I can go to talk about being a parent or friend of a person who is LBGTQ?

PFLAG- Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Bi, Trans, Intersex, Queer and Questioning too): PFLAG is a support group for parents, families, and friends of those in the queer community. We work to educate ourselves and to keep our families together. We meet monthly to share our experiences. Phone for location, date and time.

What LBGTQ programs exist specifically for newcomers?

In Toronto, an initiative called **Among Friends** is at the 519 Church Street Community Centre: this is an LBGTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer) refugee and immigrant project. Among Friends is three-year program to improve access to services for LBGTQ refugees and immigrants in Toronto. The project aims to impact the way LBGTQ refugees and immigrants access services such as settlement, healthcare, employment and housing.

Agencies from throughout the sector will be supported over a period of time in making their space more accessible to LBGTQ refugees and immigrants. Volunteers welcome.

What LBGTQ programs are there for youth?

Lesbian Gay Bi Youth Line: 1-800-268-YOUTH: The Lesbian Gay Bi Youth Line is toll-free, confidential, peer-support phone lines for LBGTQ youth. Our youth volunteers provide peer-support, information and referrals to youth 26 years and under. Our phone lines are open Sunday to Friday 4-9:30p.m.

K-W Counselling and Family and Children's Services has an initiative designed for LBGTQ youth. It is called the **OK2BME** project.

I am a lesbian and a mom of a young child. Where can I go to meet others with shared experience?

Lesbian Moms and Tots: A drop-in program that meets every second Saturday of each month at 9:30-11:30a.m.

Social Assistance (Ontario Works)

Social Assistance (Ontario Works)

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support 519-571-1912	58 Queen St. South Kitchener (in The Working Centre building) www.mcrs.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Waterloo Region Community Legal Services 519-743-0254	170 Victoria St. South Kitchener www.wrcls.ca	19 Victoria South; 20 Victoria Hills
Waterloo Region Social Services Employment & Income Support 519-883-2100 (new applicants) 519-740-5700 (eligibility & procedures)	99 Regina St. South Waterloo www.region.waterloo.on.ca	7 (C, D, E)

What is Social Assistance (also called Welfare or Ontario Works)?

Social Assistance is given to individuals or families who are physically able to work but who cannot find work, working people who do not earn enough, and people making refugee claims, who are not allowed to work immediately. This program is called Ontario Works (also called welfare).

How do I apply for Ontario Works?

Contact the **Waterloo Region Social Service Department, Employment and Income Support** and ask to apply. You must apply by phone. If you do not have a phone, ask a settlement agency for help. They will tell you what information you will need to provide. You are supposed to get an interview within 4 working days. The interview will take place at the Waterloo Region Social Services Department office, at your home, or at another location.

If you need help to apply for Ontario Works (including interpretation), contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support** (for refugee claimants)
- **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**

What questions will I be asked?

You will be asked information about yourself, your family, and anyone else who lives with you. This information includes:

- Family size and ages of family members
- Income (including pensions and allowances)
- Assets (money in bank accounts, investments, car ownership, house ownership)
- Debts (including money you owe on credit cards, to the bank, or to other people)
- Housing arrangements
- Education and employment status

You and your family will also be asked to show documents such as:

- Identification (birth certificate, Social Insurance Number, health insurance form, passport or immigration papers)
- Divorce papers, separation agreements, or child support orders
- Rent receipts, hydro, and heating bills
- Bank books
- Deeds and mortgages for real estate
- Credit card statements
- Proof of school attendance
- Proof of employment, if you are employed

What if I have difficulty speaking English?

The **Waterloo Region Social Services Department** has an arrangement with the **K-W Multicultural Centre** to provide interpreters to help. There is no cost to you for this service.

Keep in mind that you will be asked to sign documents and to provide information that will determine your eligibility for benefits. It is important that you understand clearly what you are signing and what the worker tells you. Always ask questions if you are not sure about something.

What support does Ontario Works provide?

You will be assigned a case worker who acts as your main contact with the Ontario Works program. The case worker should be able to answer most of your questions about the program, and he or she maintains your file, so any changes to your situation need to be communicated to him or her.

The focus of Ontario Works is to get you working or back to work as quickly as possible. There are a number of employment programs that you are eligible for, including education subsidies and self-employment programs. Ask your caseworker for more information.

Benefits you will receive while on Ontario Works include:

- Money to cover rent and food
- An amount of money called *community start-up*. You must ask your caseworker if you are eligible for community start-up. You can only receive this when you first arrive in Canada. It is money to help you rent an apartment (for example, it can be used for your rent deposit) and maybe purchase a little furniture.
- Health coverage, including emergency dental care
- Some child care services, or child care subsidy (see the Parenting section of the guide)

What can I do if I am refused Ontario Works benefits?

You can appeal this decision by asking for an *internal review*. Ask your worker to give you, in writing, the reasons why you are being refused Ontario Works benefits. You must ask for an internal review within 10 days of receiving the decision to refuse or cut off your benefits.

If the decision is mailed to you, you have 13 days from the day it was mailed to ask for an internal review. Your request for an internal review must be made in writing. For help writing this request contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- **Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support** (for refugee claimants)
- **Waterloo Region Community Legal Services.**

You should get a decision on your internal review within 10 days of requesting it. If you are still refused benefits, you have 30 days to appeal the original decision. You will make your appeal to the *Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT)*.

Can I get benefits if I quit a job or get fired?

If you quit your job or get fired, you could be denied benefits for three months. If you are already receiving benefits and refuse a job or quit your part-time or casual employment, you could be cut off benefits for three months.

If you have reasonable cause for quitting, you should not be penalized by having to wait to get benefits. Examples of quitting with reasonable cause include:

- A workplace that is unsafe or dangerous to your health
- A health problem that prevents you from doing your job. If you quit for medical reasons, you will need a letter from your doctor.
- Discrimination based on your race, religion, sexual orientation or disability
- Sexual harassment

What if I earn money while I'm receiving Social Assistance?

If you get a part-time job or earn money from work that you do, it is important to let your caseworker know how much you are earning. It is possible that some of this money will be deducted from your Social Assistance cheque. This will depend on your particular circumstances. Ask your caseworker for an explanation. It is important that you report this income to your caseworker. If you do not, you can be penalized later and ordered to repay this amount to social services.

Socialization & Integration

Socialization & Integration

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Community Centres/ Neighbourhood Associations	Contact Community Information Centre (see address & phone below)	
Community Information Centre of Waterloo Region 519-579-3800	151 Frederick St. 3 rd floor www.waterlooregion.org/cic	Walking distance from downtown; 8 Fairview via Franklin; 23 Idlewood
Community Services, Parks and Recreation Department City of Kitchener 519-741-2382 City of Waterloo 519-747-8739	Kitchener City Hall, 200 King St. W. Waterloo City Hall, 100 Regina St. S.	Very near the bus terminal; 7 (C, D, E)
Ethnocultural Groups	Contact K-W Multicultural Centre or Community Information Centre	
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West, downtown Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
Religious Communities/ Churches	Look under "churches" in the Yellow Pages of the phone book	
Volunteer Action Centre 519-742-8610	151 Frederick St. West, Kitchener www.volunteerkw.ca	Walking distance from downtown; 8 Fairview via Franklin; 23 Idlewood
YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services, Host Program 519-579-9622	800 King St. West, 3 rd floor Kitchener www.kwymca.org/Contribute/immigrant/immigrant.asp	7 (C, D, E)

What do "socialization" and "integration" mean?

Socialization happens when you learn about a society by participating in the community around you. When you participate, you meet people, you learn about community organizations, and you see how other people behave, talk, and act. Integration is keeping the cultural traditions and values that are important to you at the same time that you participate

in the broader society. Socialization and integration allow you to become aware of the traditions and values of Canadians, and for Canadians to become familiar with your traditions and values. It means sharing with and learning from each other.

Participating in activities in the community is an important way to learn about and become more comfortable in K-W. This may be harder or easier for you depending on your personality, your level of English, your friendliness, or the friendliness of people you meet. There are many different ways you can become involved. You will have to decide what ways feel comfortable, possible, and helpful for you.

How can I meet people from my country of origin?

Many ethnocultural communities in K-W have organized formal or informal groups for different purposes. These purposes may be one or more of the following:

- To maintain and promote culture, language, and religion
- For education, information-sharing, recreation or social activities
- For settlement support and orientation to Canada and K-W in particular
- For mutual support and help during a crisis

If you want information about the activities or organizations of your ethnic community and how to call the organization, contact:

- **K-W Multicultural Centre**

If your ethnic community does not have its own group you may want to work with other people to organize one. You can contact the **K-W Multicultural Centre** to ask for some advice on how to do this.

CKWR 98.5FM (www.ckwr.com, 519-886-9870) is a community radio station that has some programs in languages other than English or French.

How can I meet people in my neighbourhood or the larger community?

The first places where you meet people may be at a local store, in the building where you live, or in your English as a Second Language class. There are many other ways, however, to

meet other people and to become involved in the community. Some examples are:

1. Neighbourhood associations and community centres: Neighbourhood associations are committees of people living in the same part of the city who want to work together to help their neighbourhood. These associations may help take care of the local park, organize activities for children, or talk to the city government about a particular neighbourhood issue.

Community centres are buildings where different programs are offered for people living in the neighbourhood. The programs in your community centre may be for:

- Meeting new people and learning more about the community
- Using your skills and experiences or learning new skills (the centres need volunteers to help run the programs)
- Exercise or recreation (for different ages)
- Support to parents, youth, seniors, and children
- Cultural exchange
- English as a Second Language classes
- Childcare programs

The programs at your community centre may benefit and interest you whatever your age or your family situation. If you need help finding the community centre in your area you can ask for information at:

- **Community Information Centre**
- **City of Kitchener, Parks and Recreation Department**
- **City of Waterloo, Parks and Recreation Department**
- **K-W Multicultural Centre**

2. YMCA Host Program: The YMCA Host program matches newcomers to Canada with volunteer "hosts" from the K-W community. The volunteer hosts can help newcomers by offering friendship and helping newcomers become more familiar with K-W. There is also a School Host Program that may benefit your children. You can get more information from your child's ESL teacher or from the YMCA.

If you would like to have a volunteer "host" (this may be a single person or a family) you

can get more information by contacting **YMCA Cross-Cultural and Community Services**.

3. Volunteering to help a community organization or institution

Volunteering is donating your time to help a community group deliver services to the community. Many *non-profit* agencies offer services to help different people in the community. A non-profit group is not a private business and any money that it makes must be used to deliver services to the community. Non-profit organizations can be very large (e.g. public libraries, hospitals) or much smaller. They provide services in health, education, recreation, emergency food and shelter, employment, settlement for newcomers, programs for children, youth, seniors, and parents and many other things. (An example of some of these groups can be found in the yellow pages of the phone book under "Social and Human Service Organizations"). All non-profit groups need volunteers to help deliver their programs.

Many people in K-W volunteer for one or more than one group. People volunteer for different reasons: to help the community and other people; to meet other people; to be busy outside the home; to practice old skills and to learn new ones, to gain experience that can help in finding work, or to practice English.

Volunteering can be a very helpful way of learning about the community and meeting people. If you want to volunteer you should think about what work you enjoy, what you want to learn, and what time and skills you can share. You can ask about volunteering at your community centre, at a local school, at a settlement agency, or at other places you know. If you are not sure where you would like to volunteer, there is also a community agency that tries to help non-profit groups find volunteers. For more information about volunteering in the community you can contact the **Volunteer Action Centre**.

Where can I go for sports or recreation?

1. Public parks and playgrounds: There are public parks and playgrounds throughout K-W. Victoria Park and Waterloo Park are the largest parks in K-W and are especially nice for picnics, walking and playing. Many parks and schools have baseball fields, soccer (football)

fields, or basketball and tennis courts that can be used without reservation or cost. Sports teams can pay to reserve and use a field for their games. Other people cannot use the field at these times.

There are several public outdoor swimming pools that are open during the summer. These pools are run by the city and they have lifeguards to supervise the swimmers. You must pay some money each time you go to these pools. There are also some public indoor swimming pools that are open through the year. These also cost money for each use. All of the pools have specific hours when they are open. For more information about sports facilities you can call your city's **Parks and Recreation Departments**

2. Sports teams

There are many sports leagues in the city for many different sports. There are teams for children, youth, or adults and for males or females (at a younger age girls and boys often play together on teams). It usually costs something to play on these teams, although you may be able to get help paying fees for your children. You may be able to get information about sports teams from friends, community members, ESL students, or a settlement agency. You can also call the **Parks and Recreation Department** in either Kitchener or Waterloo City Hall. Do not forget to ask about help with your children's sports fees if you need to.

3. Theatre, arts, and music

There are different art galleries, museums, community music groups, and public libraries throughout K-W. For information you can look in the yellow pages of the phone book under **Arts and Cultural Organizations, Theatres, Museums, or Associations**. You can also contact:

- **Community Information Centre**
- **Community Services (Parks and Recreation Department) of
City of Kitchener or City of Waterloo**

4. Community celebrations or festivals

There are special community celebrations that happen throughout the year. There are music, theatre, cultural and other celebrations that are free and open to the public. These include:

- Multicultural Festival - Victoria Park, end of June,
contact the **K-W Multicultural Centre**
- Canada Day - July 1st, there are fireworks and other events at different parks in
Kitchener and Waterloo
- Parades down King St. – Oktoberfest Parade, Santa Claus Parade

You can contact the Parks and Recreation Departments at Kitchener and Waterloo City Halls for magazines that explain which celebrations, festivals, and other activities are planned through the year.

Where can I find a group with whom I can worship?

There is freedom of religion in Canada. The dominant religion in Canada is Christian but many other faith groups are present in the country and in K-W. You may find a place of worship by speaking to members of your ethnic community but you can also find a list of faith groups by looking in the *Yellow Pages* of the phone book under "*Churches*" and *other places of worship*, or under "*Synagogues*". The church section includes many different Christian groups but it also includes Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh groups. A Bahai Information Centre is listed in the White Pages. There may be other religious groups that meet in the area that are not listed in the phone book.

Transportation

Transportation

Organizations Listed in this Section

Organization	Address	Bus Route
Driver Examination Centre 519-893-7110	1405 Ottawa Street N., Unit 11, Kitchener	1 Stanley Park
Grand River Transit City Transit 519-585-7555 Out of Town Transit 519-585-2370	Bus Terminal 15 Charles St. W. Kitchener www.grt.ca	
K-W Multicultural Centre 519-745-2531	102 King St. West Kitchener www.kwmc.on.ca	Walking distance from the bus terminal
The People's Car Co-op 519-578-1895	29 King St. East, Unit E., Kitchener www.peoplescar.org	Walking distance from the bus terminal
TRIP: Transit for Reduced Income Program The Working Centre 519-743-1151 Lutherwood Cambridge 519-623-9380	58 Queen St. South, Kitchener 35 Dickson St., Cambridge	Walking distance from the bus terminal

How do I use the bus?

The K-W population is served by Grand River Transit. Buses run from 6:00 in the morning to midnight. Bus fare can be paid in different ways. Decide which one is the best for you.

- **Cash** (this is the most expensive. You can ask for a transfer that allows you to use other buses for approximately one and a half hours.)
- **Tickets** (cheaper than paying in cash). You can buy them at the bus terminal and at some convenience stores around the city. There are different prices for children, adults, and seniors.
- **Monthly pass** (if you use the bus frequently, it is cheaper to buy a monthly pass)
- **Day pass**
- **Sunday/holiday family pass**

Who is eligible for transit discounts?

Discounts are available for the following groups:

- Children under five ride for free.
- Seniors (65 and above)
- All levels of students
- English as a Second Language (ESL) students

Discounts are also available through a community program called **TRIP: Transit for Reduced Incomes Program**. TRIP is a discounted adult bus pass program designed to make transit use more affordable. The cost for a monthly bus pass is reduced to \$34.00 for people living on a low income. To find out more, apply at one of the two agencies listed above. Students and seniors are not eligible for the program.

Where can I get information about public transportation?

You can get information on the phone or on the Internet. You can also get information about each bus schedule at the bus terminal on Charles Street, or in each bus. A map of Kitchener-Waterloo showing bus routes is available at the bus terminal. This costs a few dollars.

How do I find out the bus schedule?

Bus schedules show the time buses arrive at or leave from different locations. Each bus stop has a number (e.g. 1412). You need to know the bus stop number near your home or where you are. Then dial 519-888- and the bus stop number (e.g. if the bus stop number is 1412, dial 519-888-1412) The Tele-voice will tell you the time the bus will arrive.

What are the requirements to drive in Ontario?

Several points on the current driving rules include:

- If you are a new driver, you must get an Ontario driver's licence. Ontario uses a graduated licensing system, which means that new drivers have to practice driving before getting a full driver's licence.

- If you are a new resident of Ontario and have a valid driver's licence from another province or country, you can use that licence for 60 days in Ontario. If you want to continue to drive after 60 days, you must get an Ontario driver's licence.
- If you are a licenced driver from a country other than Canada, USA, or Japan, you must meet the Ontario driver medical requirements, have knowledge of the rules and pass the road test.
- For a more detailed newcomers' guide on driving in Ontario, go to www.drivetest.ca/en/edu/ReadyNewcomer.aspx
- The Ministry of Transportation will require that your licence be translated into English. The **K-W Multicultural Centre** can refer you to translators.
- You must be at least 16 years old.
- You need a general driver's licence (class "G") to drive most vehicles. You need special licences to drive a motorcycle, large truck or a bus.
- If you drive a car without a licence you can be charged by the police. This is a serious offence.

Who issues the driver's licence?

The **Ministry of Transportation** is responsible for driver's licences in Ontario. To apply for an Ontario driver's licence, you must write a written test and take a road (driving) test. If you need language assistance, the **K-W Multicultural Centre** can provide you with an interpreter to translate your written test. Ask about the cost of this service. Interpreters cannot help you with the test; they are only there to translate the questions for you. To request an interpreter, you must go to the office of the **K-W Multicultural Centre** and fill out an interpreter request form.

You have to pay the Ministry of Transportation \$125 for the written test (G1 Licence) and the first road test (G2 Licence). If you fail and have another initial road test, you must pay a smaller fee for each additional road test. For the second road test (G Licence), the cost is \$75. If you fail this test, the fee is \$75 for a make-up test. The **Driver Examination Centre** will tell you what to do to get your licence. If you have a driver's licence from

outside Canada, take it with you.

Where do I get training for a driver's licence?

Friends or family members can help you learn to drive, if they already have a driver's licence. The Official Driver's Handbook from the **Driver Examination Centre** will also provide valuable written information. Driving lessons are available from private driving schools for a fee. Look in the telephone book and check for the best rates as the rates vary from one school to another. Ask other people you know who have attended these driving schools which schools offer the best value for the cost.

I am wondering about a car. What information do I need?

Before you buy a car, you have to gather information from friends, libraries, or car dealers regarding:

- The type of car
- The advantage and disadvantage of leasing or buying
- The advantage of buying new or used vehicles
- Insurance - in Canada insurance for vehicles is required by law. You buy insurance through private insurance companies. Therefore, carefully examine before signing and check for the best rate as the rate varies from one company to another.
- Other financial obligations that you have in the long run that may affect your ability to pay for or lease a vehicle

Make sure that you understand whatever options you choose.

What other ways can I have access to a car?

An alternative to owning a vehicle is to become a member of the **People's Car Co-op**. This car-sharing organization works well for people who would like access to a car but do not need a car all day, every day. When used in complement with other means of transportation, it is more affordable than owning your own car.

Appendix

Other Directories for Kitchener-Waterloo

1. The Blue Book

This is a directory of community services in Waterloo Region published by the Community Information Centre of K-W. The most recent edition was published in 2006 / 2007. The Centre also maintains a large database on area community services.

- **Community Information Centre**

519-579-3800

151 Frederick St. 3rd floor

www.waterlooregion.org/cic

2. Basic Needs Guide 2006-2007

Prepared by the Community Information Centre of K-W, this guide can be downloaded from the website, or bought for \$4. It provides local information about such things as food, clothing, shelter, health, and others.

- **Community Information Centre**

519-579-3800

151 Frederick St. 3rd floor

www.waterlooregion.org/basic

3. First Steps: An Orientation Package for Newcomers

Citizenship and Immigration Canada produced this package of orientation information for refugees arriving in Ontario in 2003. It has a section geared for Government Assisted Refugees. It has been published in ten languages. For more information, see:

- **www.settlement.org**

4. Citizenship and Immigration Canada Guides

Several publications from Citizenship and Immigration Canada provide detailed information for newcomers to Canada. Most information provided is not specific to any one

community. These are available online at:

- <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pub/index-2.html>

Some titles of interest include: **You Asked about... Immigration and Citizenship, A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada, or A Look At Canada.**

5. The Little Black Book for Youth

The Kitchener Safe and Healthy Community Advisory Committee prepares this handbook. The handbook answers several important questions about resources available to youth in the area.

- **City of Kitchener Community Programs and Services, Safe and Healthy Communities** 519-741-2623

http://www.kitchener.ca/city_hall/departments/community_services/community_program/safe_communities.html

6. Parent Guide

A thorough local resource guide that is relevant for parents of children up to age six. For more info: www.parentguide.ca or 1-877-645-7342

Most parents of babies born in the local hospitals receive a copy, but if you need one, it may be available at:

- **Waterloo Region Community Health Department, Health Babies, Healthy Children Program** 99 Regina St., Waterloo 519-883-2245

7. Where to Phone When you need Help or Information

For families with children up to age six, this two-page document lists area agencies and programs that help children and their families. It is published by the **Waterloo Regional Health Department, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program**. 99 Regina St., Waterloo 519-883-2245

8. Senior Citizens Information

Information about services specific to senior citizens can be found in

- **City of Kitchener’s Leisure Guide** or **Best of Times** publication, available at City of Kitchener facilities, including the Breithaupt Centre at 350 Margaret Ave., 519-741-2502 or online at www.kitchener.ca
- **City of Waterloo’s Programs and Activities Guide**, available at City of Waterloo facilities, including the Adult Recreation Centre, 185 King St. South, Waterloo 519-579-1020 or online at www.city.waterloo.on.ca
- **Waterloo Wellington Community Care Access Centre**: 800 King St. West, 519-748-2222 or online at www.ccac-ont.ca