



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Resources for Newcomers to Sarnia-Lambton: An Asset and Gap Analysis

2025

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**Western
SocialScience**

Network for Economic
and Social Trends (NEST)



The Sarnia-Lambton Local Immigration Partnership is an initiative funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and housed within the Corporation of the County of Lambton

Funded by:

Financé par :



**Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada**

**Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada**



The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or official policies of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) or the County of Lambton.

Executive Summary

Established in 2010, the Sarnia-Lambton Local Immigration Partnership (SL-LIP) is a community-wide, multi-sectoral partnership that works to increase collaboration between settlement agencies and smooth newcomers' settlement and integration experiences. The Partnership includes representatives from the settlement, healthcare, education, employment services, social services, economic development, and business sectors of the community. By improving the delivery of resources and fostering strong partnerships, the SL-LIP seeks to ensure that newcomers have access to the services necessary to establish fulfilling and productive lives in the region, ultimately contributing to the long-term sustainability and growth of Sarnia-Lambton.

In 2025, the SL-LIP commissioned the Network for Economic and Social Trends (NEST) Research Consultancy at Western University to conduct a comprehensive review of the sectors relevant to immigrants and temporary residents, and to survey organizations that may serve newcomers in the Sarnia-Lambton region. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the resources that are in place to help newcomers transition to both short-term and long-term residency, identify service gaps, and provide actionable recommendations to enhance the local support structure. This report, which presents the results from this project, builds on the research and facilitation portion of the SL-LIP's 2022-2025 settlement strategy and will be used to inform their strategy moving forward.

This project included two components: a desk review focused on the various supports available in the Sarnia-Lambton region and a survey conducted with representatives from organizations that operate in the community. Both components were used to identify assets and challenges to settlement, as well as areas for improvement, leading to a set of recommendations for enhancing the integration of newcomers in Sarnia-Lambton.

Executive Summary

A desk review of more than 130 reports, studies, and Internet resources was used to compile an inventory of existing supports and programs that help make Sarnia-Lambton a welcoming community, which has been described as "a collective effort to design and sustain a place where immigrants feel that they belong and that supports immigrants' economic, socio-cultural, and civic-political integration. A welcoming community has structures, processes, and practices in place to meet the needs and promote the inclusion of immigrants in all aspects of life and actively works to ensure these are effective" (Pathways to Prosperity Partnership 2023, p. 6).¹ The desk review focused on the following sectors: Settlement, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Education, Health and Mental Health Care, Housing, Transportation, and Childcare.

An online survey of organizations was designed through consultation with the SL-LIP. It included questions about the types of services offered, the demographics of the newcomers served, the degree to which organizations are aware of and collaborate with one another, the intended outcomes of services and methods of outcome evaluation, if and what type of client data is collected, perceptions of how newcomers are faring in the region, perceived challenges and gaps in service provision, perceptions of Sarnia-Lambton as a destination for migrants, and strategies for future outreach and service provision. Survey distribution was led by the SL-LIP who, in April 2025, contacted key individuals at organizations from four sectors of interest: settlement, employment and entrepreneurship, education, and health and mental health care. The survey was circulated to 43 service providers, and a total of 21 responses were collected: two from the settlement sector, nine from the employment and entrepreneurship sector, three from the education sector, and seven from the health and mental health care sector.

1. Pathways to Prosperity Partnership. (2023). Measuring welcoming communities: A toolkit for communities and those who support them [Report]. <http://p2pcanada.ca/library/measuring-welcoming-communities-a-toolkit-forcommunities-and-those-who-support-them>

Executive Summary

In many respects, Sarnia-Lambton's infrastructure for welcoming newcomers is already far-reaching, reflecting years of steady effort, particularly on the part of the county and its member municipalities, as well as settlement, education, and business organizations. The desk review, for instance, reveals a large volume of interconnected resources, while the organizational survey quantifies the great degree to which many organizations are already sharing with each other both within and beyond the region. Particularly encouraging are the cross-sector partnerships that have evolved, such as the employment of the federally funded Settlement Workers in Schools program in area schools, a program to assist temporary residents in agriculture to access services vital for their health, including medical care and social connections and, most recently, the successful multi-agency application, led by the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership, to be included in the Ontario Rural Economic Development through Immigration program.

A number of these partnerships might be geared to serve the community at large, such as Pathways Health Centre's SmartHub services, but their design also takes into account the unique needs of the region's migrant populations, whether it be access to translation services or offering culturally sensitive services and supports. The volume of sharing that already takes place in the region between different agencies and groups involved is evident in the responses to the organizational survey, as is the willingness of several groups to take the extra step of sharing data to improve newcomer services and supports.

This study also reveals many challenges to the delivery of services, with most sectors reviewed in the organizational survey indicating that funding constraints limit the system's ability to expand its capacity and benefits. Other issues and gaps emerge, and many of these concern connections. Settlement agencies that serve immigrant populations, for instance, could strengthen their connections to the temporary migrant community. Organizations that might support another niche population, such as people needing mental health support, might consider fostering greater connection with settlement agencies to develop strategies to address the intersecting needs of migrants.

Executive Summary

Many respondents to the organizational survey highlighted the importance of fostering greater engagement among the broader Sarnia-Lambton community to support the successful transition of newcomers, and of ensuring training to help staff members improve their responses to the unique needs of the migrant community.

Sarnia-Lambton's commitment to welcoming newcomers is evident in its robust and collaborative support network. While the region can expect to face continuing challenges related to funding and finding resources to support temporary migrant populations, the well-established principle of inter-agency and inter-sectoral cooperation, combined with a push for local solutions, offers a clear path forward. So too does the targeted investment in key areas, such as specialized navigation and improved connectivity. Ultimately, these efforts will ensure Sarnia-Lambton remains an inclusive and supportive home for all.