

Let's Talk About Poverty

THE URBAN POVERTY CONSORTIUM OF WATERLOO REGION

POVERTY FACT SHEET SERIES - FACT SHEET #2

SEPTEMBER 27, 2000

“ In recognition of work done in the community related to poverty, the Urban Poverty Consortium seeks to build and extend new and existing efforts on poverty, to raise awareness, share information and data and to catalyze further action on poverty.”

A Fresh Start

“I came to Canada as a refugee with my father. We survived on welfare ... I had always done well in school and I dreamed of going to university. I applied and was accepted at the University of Waterloo ...”

Who are the New Canadians?

Anybody not born in Canada is considered a new Canadian, or an immigrant. Of course, “new” is a relative term and information cited in this fact sheet often will make reference to a period of immigration (see Table Two). A new Canadian’s legal status can be that of citizen, permanent resident or non-permanent resident. Non-permanent residents include foreign students, refugee claimants and persons having official authorization to work. Immigrants come to this country for a variety of reasons - to seek employment and investment opportunities, to be re-united with family and to escape war or persecution.¹

The vast majority of people who immigrate to Canada come to Ontario. As of 1996, 2,787,030 immigrants and non-permanent residents lived in Ontario. Of that number, 86,370 newcomers - mainly from Europe, Asia, South America and Central America - settled in Waterloo Region. Immigrants and non-permanent residents comprise 21.56% of the total population of Waterloo Region.²

Newcomers to Canada see Waterloo Region as a desirable place in which to live. Officials with the Waterloo-Wellington office of Citizenship and Immigration Canada have noted that government-sponsored and group-sponsored immigrants arrive in Canada at various points of entry and often choose Waterloo Region as a preferred destination. Factors such as comprehensive community

supports for immigrants and a relatively low unemployment rate may account for secondary migration to the three urban areas of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

New Canadians and Poverty

New Canadians are more likely to be living in poverty and their experience of poverty can be of a longer duration than that of the general population.³ This is particularly true of recent immigrants - whose period of immigration falls between 1990 and 1996 - and non-permanent residents. For the purposes of this fact sheet, Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut-off, or LICO, is being used to define poverty. Table One shows the LICO, based on family size, for Waterloo Region.

Table One
Low Income Cut-offs for Waterloo Region

Size of Family Unit	Monthly	Annual
1 person	\$1,244	\$14,694
2 persons	\$1,555	\$18,367
3 persons	\$1,934	\$22,844
4 persons	\$2,342	\$27,650
5 persons	\$2,617	\$30,910
6 persons	\$2,893	\$34,168

Source: Statistics Canada, *Low Income Cut-offs*, Cat. No. 13-551-XPB, January, 1997

Almost 18% of all immigrants residing in Waterloo Region live below the LICO, as compared to 13.17% of Canadian-born residents. Non-permanent residents experience the highest rate of poverty - 44.54% in Waterloo Region live below the LICO. When compared to the national data, poverty rates are lower for new Canadians living in the three urban centers of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge.⁴

Table Two
Poverty Rates By Period of Immigration,
Waterloo Region and Canada

Period of Immigration	Before 1986	1986-1990	1990-1996
Waterloo Region	11.52%	24.92%	40.63%
Canada	17.29%	33.55%	49.93%

Source-Statistics Canada, 1996 (custom tabulations)

Table Two shows that poverty rates are lower in Waterloo Region than those for Canada for the three periods of immigration. Historically, immigrants have moved out of poverty the longer they stayed in Canada. This trend is reflected in both the local and national data. However, since 1989, a new trend has developed - the earnings gap between Canadian-born and new Canadian workers is wider.⁵ This may indicate that new Canadians are facing greater challenges in achieving prosperity, apart from their more recent arrival in this country.

Contributing Factors

In a previous fact sheet, there was a brief examination of some of the factors that might contribute to poverty. These included a lower level of education, the tendency of unskilled jobs to pay less wages and the increasing number of single-parent families.

In *Urban Poverty in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, the Canadian Council on Social Development noted the following with regard to recent immigrants:

- most recent immigrants enter Canada as skilled workers
- recent immigrants are more likely to have completed post-secondary education
- recent immigrant families are less likely to be headed by lone parents.

These factors should indicate less of a risk of living in poverty but this is not always the case.

Table Three
Poverty Rates of Total Population and Recent Immigrants,
Waterloo Region and Canada

	Total Population	Recent Immigrants
Waterloo Region	14.30%	40.63%
Canada	19.69%	49.93%

Source-Statistics Canada, 1996 (custom tabulations). Recent immigrants refer to persons who gained landed immigrant status between 1991 and 1996.

Language and cultural barriers and a lack of knowledge around job-search techniques specific to a new community could explain a higher rate and a longer duration of poverty. Immigrants with academic, professional or trade qualifications often experience difficulty having foreign credentials recognized. As ability to communicate in a new language improves, problems related to the nuances of language, as used in the workplace, may continue to exist.

New Canadian Women

Depending upon country of origin, women who immigrate to this country may face additional barriers in their search for a better life. Immigrant women often need to seek paid employment, not only in order to support the immediate family but also family living outside of Canada.

According to the *Waterloo Region Community Health Profile 1999*, immigrant women are less likely than immigrant men to speak either of Canada's official languages - a significant obstacle to employment and access to community resources.⁶ In a two-parent household where a traditional division of labor applies, women tend to be responsible for the care of young children. This can mean less time available to upgrade language and job-related skills.

For cultural or religious reasons, a certain form of dress may be required which may be restrictive for certain working environments. However, women may feel more constrained than men in modifying their attire, where an employer is unable to make an accommodation.

~ Our Stories ~

These are true stories from New Canadians who have settled in Waterloo Region and know the kinds of barriers and opportunities that life in a new country presents.

I am 26 and came to Canada as a refugee 5 years ago. My homeland has been completely destroyed and there is no government left there. My younger sister is developmentally challenged. She lives with me. When our family was attacked, we separated, and were dispersed to the four corners of the earth. My mother is in Holland with my younger sister, and we have lost my father. He is looking for us, obviously. I have a brother in the States.

Whatever I do, I have to take care of my sister. I cannot leave her in the care of other people. I am responsible for her. Right now we are receiving Social Assistance, but I would like to get away from that and be able to work, and help my family. I don't know what to do with my little sister. If I get a job and I have to pay someone to take care of her, I will even be poorer than I am right now.

And who will take care of her while I work? She needs special care and does not speak English. Don't tell me to send her to my relatives in Holland or the States; they will not take her. There has to be a way. By the time I use my social services allowance, I am left with nothing. I am young and healthy. I have a desire to work and make something better for myself. There has to be a better way.⁷



I came to Canada as a refugee with my father. We survived on welfare in a city in Ontario. I had always done well in school and I had dreams of going to university. I applied and was accepted at the University of Waterloo.

I arrived in Kitchener-Waterloo in January. I had no place to stay so I came to the House of Friendship. My father helped me put the money together for my tuition fees. But my student loan was delayed, so I had no money for food or lodging. Because I was a university student, I was ineligible for social assistance.

I stayed at the hostel for two months as a guest. During that time, I walked the ten kilometers to university every day. Finally my student loan came through and I moved to my own place.

A few months later I returned to the hostel to thank the staff for helping me. I was happy to tell them that my father had moved to join me and that I was earning a 90+ average in my science program.⁸

References

1. *Urban Poverty in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Kevin K. Lee, Canadian Council on Social Development (2000), Pg.31
2. Statistics Canada, 1996 (custom tabulations)
3. *Poverty Profile 1997: A Report by the National Council of Welfare*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada (1999), Pg. 84
4. Statistics Canada, 1996 (custom tabulations)
5. *Urban Poverty in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, Kevin. K. Lee, Canadian Council on Social Development (2000), Pg. 35
6. *Waterloo Region Community Health Profile: Indicators from the 1991 and 1996 Census of the Population*, Waterloo Region Community Health Department (1999), Pg. 14
7. Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre, Personal Stories File (September, 2000)
8. *Friend To Friend: Stories and Photos from the House of Friendship*, House of Friendship, Kitchener (1999)

Watch For Upcoming Fact Sheets

Through the fall and winter of 2000, the Urban Poverty Consortium will be releasing additional poverty fact sheets on the following topics:

- ✓ People who are disabled
- ✓ Seniors
- ✓ Working Poor
- ✓ Sole Support Parents
- ✓ Youth
- ✓ Children

Resources and Initiatives

The following is a listing of some of the community resources available to new Canadians in the Waterloo Region. Please contact them for additional information on their various programs and services. Many of the community agencies operate through the efforts of their volunteers and welcome your support. In addition to providing services to immigrants, the government departments listed also help fund local initiatives.

Focus for Ethnic Women
33 Bridgeport Rd. E.
Waterloo, ON N2J 2J4
(519)746-3411
ffew@golden.net

K-W English School
108 University Ave E.
Waterloo, ON N2J 2W2
(519)886-3300

Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre
Market Square, Lower Level
25 Frederick Street
Kitchener, ON
(519)745-2531
kwmc@kwmc.on.ca
www.kwmc.on.ca

Ministry of Citizenship, Culture &
Recreation, SW
30 Duke St W
Kitchener, ON N2H 3W5
(800)265-2189
www.gov.on.ca

New Canadian Program
12 Dupont Street W.
Waterloo, ON N2L 2X6
(519)883-0216
admin@newcanadians.org
www.newcanadians.org

St. Louis Adult Learning Center
75 Allen Street E
Waterloo, ON N2J 1J3
(519)745-1201

Working for Work
75 Frederick Street,
Kitchener, ON N2H 2L3
(519)570-3552
wfw@easynet.on.ca
www.easy.on.ca/~wfw.net

YMCA of Kitchener-Waterloo
Cross-cultural Services Branch
Market Square, Upper Level
25 Frederick St
Kitchener, ON N2H 6M8
(519)579-9622
office@kwymca/cccs.org

Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Waterloo-Wellington Office
29 Duke Street E
Kitchener, ON N2H 1A2
(800)242-2100

YMCA of Cambridge
Settlement and Integration Services
30 Parkhill Road W
Cambridge, ON N1S 1C9
(519) 621-1621

~ For More Information ~

Contact the Members of the Urban Poverty Consortium of Waterloo Region:

Opportunities 2000

Mark Cabaj 579-7586x131
mcabaj@bond.net

Social Planning Council of Kitchener - Waterloo

Trudy Beaulne 579-3800
spckw@waterlooregion.org

Social Planning Council of Cambridge & North Dumfries

Gloria DeSantis 623-1713
spccam@sentex.net

Waterloo Region Community Health Department

Barb Powell 883-2258
pbarbara@region.waterloo.on.ca
Bryan Embree 883-5167
ebryan@region.waterloo.on.ca
Terry Goodenough 883-5322
gterry@region.waterloo.on.ca

Waterloo Region Social Services Department

Lynn Randall 883-2190
lrاندall@region.waterloo.on.ca
Jean Latham 883-2173
ljean@region.waterloo.on.ca
Paula Stuhlmacher 883-2040
stuhlmap@region.waterloo.on.ca



Produced and Published by the
Regional Municipality of Waterloo

HDP&EP001