

Francophone groups to identify French-language health care providers in region

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The Franco-Ontarian flag, the Canadian flag and the flag of Ontario seen in this Village Media file photo.

Francophone groups in Guelph, Wellington County and the Region of Waterloo are working together to identify health service providers who offer their services in French to allow people more opportunities to live, work and be supported in one of Canada's two official languages.

"There's a lot of interest in the region, not just Guelph, about how do we collaborate to make these private and public services better," said Dominique O'Rourke, founder of Réseau-Franco Guelph, one of the groups participating in a roundtable discussion on the topic on Thursday at Kitchener City Hall.

In Guelph and Wellington County alone, there are 2,435 francophones and 17,060 people who speak both English and French.

The groups want to help support francophones who have lived in the area for a long time, as well as those who have moved to the region from other parts of the country and from around the world.

“There are countries in the world where French is the first language,” said O’Rourke. “They come to Canada believing they speak one of the official languages and they think they are going to be able to access services in French.”

The groups are doing an inventory of health care providers in the region who speak French, as part of their Welcoming Communities initiative.

“What they want to do is identify health services professionals who speak French and also students in the health sciences field who are bilingual or French and to network them together so we can create opportunities to deliver health care services in French,” said O’Rourke.

Because of challenges in accessing even the simplest services in French in the region, O’Rourke said some francophones elect to move to larger urban centres where French-language supports can more easily be found.

“The goal of Welcoming Communities is to help connect people with the right services, provide them with a network and make them feel welcome so they will stay,” said O’Rourke.

Francophone Round Table Waterloo Wellington Guelph takes place Thursday at Kitchener City Hall from 6 to 8 p.m. and is open to the public. Register by March 25 at [this link](#).

The round table will also concentrate on resource-sharing and project coordination between the groups and organizations represented at the round table, including: Réseau-Franco Guelph, Viamonde and MonAvenir school boards, representation from CMHA, the LLHIN and the University of Guelph.

“Part of this regional roundtable is not to compete, but to offer complimentary programming,” said O’Rourke. “I think it’s important for this rather large invisible minority to be able to gather, to reflect its diversity and to maximize opportunities to live and work in French.”

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