



Waterloo-Wellington-Guelph initiative to help French community access health services

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Hot on the heels of International Day of La Francophonie, initiatives are launching to help serve the more than 59,000 French-speaking residents in the region.

The Waterloo-Wellington-Guelph Francophone Roundtable, launching at Kitchener city hall on March 28, will stimulate collaboration among francophone organizations in Waterloo Region and Guelph-Wellington, to maximize project co-ordination and resource sharing.

The roundtable includes Réseau-Franco Guelph, Viamonde and MonAvenir school boards, as well as representation from the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Local Health Integration Network and the University of Guelph.

The group is also launching its Welcoming Community initiative to help identify, welcome and connect French-speaking health-care professionals and students to create opportunities for community involvement, networking and internships.

Nabila Sissaoui, co-chair of the francophone roundtable, says that the Welcoming Community initiative will help ensure that French-speaking individuals are receiving essential services.

"The objective is to retain professionals in health science within our community to better serve francophones in the region. So we will be working on strategies to attract those specialists," Sissaoui said.

The group has developed a three-year strategy to prioritize the promotion of the francophone community, including attracting youth to the community and establishing the core needs of francophone individuals.

More than 8,000 people in the region speak French as a first language, and 51,000 residents speak both of Canada's official languages.

"It's during the table that we really discuss the need of the francophone community in different sectors," said Sissaoui. "The importance here is really to help and support our francophone minority community in different ways."

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