

North West Scarborough Local Immigration Partnership

Community Summit – Minutes

Date: November 23rd, 2010, 5:30pm-8pm

Location: Scarborough Civic Centre

150 Borough Drive, Scarborough ON

Attendees:

Partner Agencies

Jamillah Mananghaya (ACSA - ISAP), Jorge Silvestri (Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto), Adriana Salazar (Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto), Patrick Au (Chinese Family Services of Ontario), Yvonne Ma (Chinese Family Services of Ontario), Seema Jabum (Muslim Welfare Centre), Kamal (ACSA)

Newcomer Community Participants

Aui Bai Ching, Ana Ananthanathara, Chengye Zhang, Cui Hong Lie, David Lai, Fuyun Zhang, Irfan Ansari, Jing He, Hi Cindy, Kaiguo Chen, Kalaimagal, Li Ng, Liu Sui Ying, M. Khan, Manzur Ahsan, Mark Harvey, Nancy, Ray Luo, R. Thevamanohararajah, Rongguan Zhang, S. Li, Sellappah Thalayasingham, Srinikethan B., Sujeevan, Thanasiri Mutta, Thambiah Rasendram, Thevamanohararajah, Timothy Chan, Vasanthi, Weihe Long, Yuang Li, Yvonne Na, Yufen Chen, Yuxian Zhang, Zhendong Hu

NWS LIP Staff

Hanifa Kassam – Manager of Settlement & Newcomer Services

Mani Mahadeva – Project Manager

Rezwan Karim – Community Outreach Worker

Michelle Davis – Administrator

Lucy Xiaohong Ren - Animator

Sri Thangarajah – Animator

Muneer Ahmed Jam – Animator

Cyleta Gibson-Sealy - Animator

Mani Mahadeva, Project Manager welcomed participants and gave a brief introduction on the NWSLIP project.

Project Brief

The **North West Scarborough Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)** aims to establish a comprehensive Settlement Strategy with community stakeholders, services providers and residents from the North West Scarborough neighbourhoods. Through the coordinated work of this partnership, a collaborative settlement strategy that includes solutions for successful social and economic integration of immigrants of North Scarborough region will be developed.

It is envisioned that the Partnership will be a dynamic collaboration of community stakeholders from many sectors, including immigrant service providers, the business sector, youth and adult services, employment, health, government and educational institutions.

Danny Nashman, the Community Summit facilitator from *The Potential Group*, introduced the agenda for the evening: reviewing the Core Strategies for enhancing the newcomer experience in NWS, getting feedback from the community, and gathering the best advice on how to put our strategies into action.

Hanifa Kassam first engaged the participants in a “Café Conversation” exercise. Participants were placed into groups of 10 with a pre determined host. Each group was given a hat filled with colourful writing utensils, paper, and candy, then asked to answer the following questions:

- **What are the best services or facilities you have used while in Canada?**
- **What services need improvement to help newcomers?**

Participants were asked to be creative and let inhibitions go. Each group’s host acted as the facilitator of that particular group, encouraging participants to express their thoughts and ideas freely, and to capture the ideas of each member. The hosts then presented the visions of each group to the whole.

Group 1:

1. What are the best services or facilities you have used while in Canada?

- Public Library system
- Consumers welfare - e.g. Flexibility of most retail store return and exchange policies
- Disability services

- Advanced medical facilities and access to health care professionals
- Senior care – long-term care facilities
- Educational system
- Cultural and historical sites and attractions
- Subsidized daycare

2. What services need improvement to help newcomers?

- Long waiting times in the ER
- Waiting period to obtain child care subsidy
- Major delays on public transportation routes
- Relationships between health care practitioners and patients – e.g. More professional and personable
- Employment agencies lack crucial connections to employers to provide more relevant jobs for clients
- CIC needs to conduct focus group discussions directly with newcomers to hear their needs and wants
- More ESL classes and generate more awareness of where this service is available

Group 2:

1. What are the best services or facilities you have used while in Canada?

- Youth services
- Senior programs and supports
- Health care facilities
- Education system
- Entertainment – e.g. Parks and recreation

2. What services need improvement to help newcomers?

- Employment services
- Settlement services

Group 3:

1. What are the best services or facilities you have used while in Canada?

- English language classes – e.g. LINC, ESL
- New Mother programs
- Nutrition classes
- Tax filling services
- Seniors Isolation programs
- After school programs for children and their parents

- Resume writing and Skills building workshops
- Newcomer help centres

2. What services need improvement to help newcomers?

- Community organizations need to connect with employers
- More senior subsidized housing and recreational programs
- More health and hygiene programs
- Free employment services
- Language programs in hospitals

Group 4:

1. What are the best services or facilities you have used while in Canada?

- Government social and financial support – e.g. Welfare, housing for low income earners, child tax benefits, etc.
- Public Transit system
- ESL/LINC classes
- Welcome Policy, Immigration Support
- Education system
- Public Libraries
- Bank and Credit system
- Employment services for youth

2. What services need improvement to help newcomers?

- Waiting period for OHIP
- Waiting period at hospital emergency room
- More relevant employment services and job opportunities to be created
- Financial support and long term care for the elderly parents
- Waiting period for child care subsidy
- Improve welfare support (provide furniture and materials at initial stage rather giving money & increase the amount)

Group 5:

1. What are the best services or facilities you have used while in Canada?

- Library services
- Parks and recreation
- Health service
- Child Tax benefits
- LINC – language training
- HRDC – job hunting

- OSAP/Scholarships and bursaries
- Public Transportation

2. What services need improvement to help newcomers?

- Access to meaningful jobs with equal pay and professionalism
- Discrimination in the professional world
- Child care facilities and full day kindergarten

The NWS Partnership Council has simplified 22 strategies into 12 recommendations in which summit participants were asked to review in pairs and then in groups of 10 make a priority list of 5.

Following the ranking in groups, participants were asked to present their top 5 priorities with the entire group

Summary of feedback from the larger group discussion:

- Most voted strategies: 1,5,7,9,11,12 (*strategies 9, 11, 12 received an equal amount of votes)
- Voted for, but not most popular: 2, 3, 8

Each working group was then assigned a strategy from the collective “list of 5” and were asked to answer the following:

- 1. What would need to be provided to make this experience better? What else would be useful?**
- 2. What services should be offered in this area?**

In their groups, participants were also asked to agree on 3 recommendations they would like to take action on to move the strategy forward

Group 1 - #11 Strategy: Improve access to health care services

- Increase opportunities for the disabled
- Shorten waiting period for health cards, the ER and doctors offices
- Post signage in different languages in health care facilities (operate and practice cultural sensitivity, acceptance and awareness)
- Increase awareness on mental health issues
- Provide more counseling services
- Better training of all level staff in terms of people skills
- More referral support

- Improve client information sharing

Group 2 – Strategy #7: Increase access to professional volunteering, training and employment opportunities

- Connect employment agencies directly to employers so that they will be better suited to obtain jobs for clients

Group 3 – Strategy # 9: Increase access to language training programs and provide multi-lingual settlement services

- English exposure trips
- More language classes specific to type of employment
- Language interpreters in hospitals
- ESL classes for all, not just newcomers

Group 4 – Strategy #12: Improve services for housing and other basic needs

- More adequate housing for families with low income and reduce waiting period
- Household goods support at the initial stage– e.g. Furniture, cleaning supplies, small appliances, etc.
- Provide proper clothing for winter climate
- Awareness and support to adapt to Canadian climate
- Partner with faith-based groups to use places of worship for collecting donation and use as an outlet for food bank
- Clear sign board about TTC schedules and contact number at all the bus halts

Group 5 – Strategy # 5: Provide more “one stop shopping” for newcomer services.

- Provide many services by multicultural service providers – e.g. HUB
- More training and capacity building of staff
- Consistent funding based on a criteria each NFO should adhere to

Danny proposed the question to participants: What needs to be provided to community organizations in order to better serve newcomers?

Participant feedback:

- Explore alternative sources of funding – e.g. Fund sharing (*many agencies may lose funding in the new year)

- Community groups need more recognition and be educated more on newcomer issues and obtain supports from settlement agencies
- Better space and resource sharing
- Development training of volunteers, community members, and leaders

Participants were asked if they would like to be sent updates over the next few months.

Mani gave closing remarks and thanked participants for their attendance and many valuable contributions.

The next Community Summit will take place January 11th, 2011 from 5:30pm-8:30pm at the Scarborough General Hospital Auditorium - 3050 Lawrence Avenue to:

- Share the final strategy & implementation plan
- Gather final feedback and receive participants endorsement

***All participants from this Community Summit were invited and encouraged to join in the next summit, January 18th 2011, at the Scarborough Hospital Auditorium, 3050 Lawrence Ave., from 5:30pm to 8:00pm ***