

# Steeles/L'Amoreaux Local Immigration Partnership

## Community Summit – Minutes

**Date: April 6, 2010, 4pm-8pm**

**Location: Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto  
5183 Sheppard Ave. East, Scarborough**

### **Attendees:**

#### Partners and Staff

Adair Heath (City of Toronto), AJ Balasingham (ACSA), Ayesha Akhyer (SAFSS), Augustine Jeevananthan (S/L'Am LIP), Christine Azeez (ACSA), Connie Leung (CICS), Cyleta Gibson-Sealy (S/L'Am LIP), Cynthia du Mont (WSNCC), Deluxshan Pathamanathan (S/L'Am LIP), Fahmida Rahman (Mitu) (SAFSS), Frank Chu (TCDSB), Grainne O'Donell (TDSB), Hanna Cabaj (TCDSB), Jamillah Mananghaya (ACSA), Jorge Silvestri (MNLCT), Karen Evans (TDSB), Karuna Wimalasuriya (ACSA), Lorraine Arulnesan (ACSA), Lucy Xiaohong Ren (S/L'Am LIP), Malsan Gananendran (ANC Glendower), Mani Mahadeva (S/L'Am LIP), Michelle Davis (S/L'Am LIP), Nikila Vijayakanthan (CanTYD), Priya Thava (CanTYD), Rabindra Sabat (SAFSS), Rewan Karim (S/L'Am LIP) Ryan Altun (ACSA), Rosa Pinto (Agincourt Library), Vithuja Vijayakanthan (CanTYD)

#### Community Residents

Annie Xu, Cathy Zhao, Dong Mei, Edmond Crosbie, Jianxiong Jiang, Manan Fazly, Marie Crosbie, Melissa Lai, Muneer J., Selina Z., Summer Gu, Timothy Chan, Yun Zhong Fan

**Mani Mahadeva, Project Manager welcomed participants to S/L'Am LIP staff and gave a brief introduction on the project.**

#### S/L'Am LIP Staff

Mani Mahadeva – Project Manager

Rezwan Karim – Community Outreach Worker

Michelle Davis – Administrator

Augustine Jeevananthan – Animator

Cyletha Gibson-Sealy - Animator

Deluxshan Pathamanathan – Animator

Lucy Xiaohong Ren - Animator

## Project Brief

The Steeles/L'Amoreaux Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) aims to establish a comprehensive Settlement Strategy with community stakeholders, services providers and residents from the Steeles/L'Amoreaux neighbourhood. 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 and Joanne Mackie from *The Potential Group* introduced what will be on the Agenda for the evening**

1. Exploring Stories and Ideas from the Stakeholder Interviews
2. Creating a Vision for the Future – What Would an Ideal Experience Look Like
3. Creating High Level Recommendations for Our Settlement Strategy
4. Next Steps for the S/L'Am Project

### **All participants introduce themselves in small groups and discuss:**

- How you are related to newcomers' services or newcomers to Canada?
- What drew you to be a part of this summit today?
- What is important to you about how we work together today?

### **Summary of feedback from group discussions:**

- Work with newcomers and want to bridge the gaps
- Curious to know what we can do better for newcomers
- To connect and learn from each other
- To establish partnerships with other agencies + create awareness of programs
- To be the voice of the unheard
- To make connections and have greater sense of belonging
- To listen to residents and others

## **Danny Nashman went over the working guidelines for the evening**

- Respect everyone as equal – listening /giving time and space to those speaking ESL
- Cell phones on vibrate
- Raise your hand when you want to speak
- No gossiping – if it's 'confidential' we honor that
- Positivity and optimism – assume one day it will work better and we're part of that...
- It's okay to have multiple perspectives – let's understand the 'why' when we disagree

## 1. Exploring Stories and Ideas from the Stakeholder Interviews

### **Danny Nashman explains the Stakeholder Interview process**

- a. Conduct interviews with stakeholders to:
  - i. Gain a better understanding about what is working best in terms of the services and support being provided to newcomers
  - ii. Highlight what key stakeholders are wishing for to enhance the newcomer and the communities' experiences
- b. Consolidate common themes about what is working best in the system today and what stakeholders wish were possible in the future
- c. Create a clear compelling vision for what newcomers and community members could experience to enhance newcomers' start in Canada.
- d. Define key areas of innovation and enhancement to help enable the desired vision

### **Participants were then asked to share stories whether personal or from interviews**

#### Stories

- Living in Canada 3 years – was very frustrated in first couple of years – did lots of research to get employment – went to JSW and, but did not get a job – did one year diploma program and sought mentorship programs – after 2.5 years went to agency and found it more welcoming! Great experience! – within 2 weeks regained confidence in services – 4 weeks later had interview and job
- Came 2.5 years – felt nobody sees my certificate (foreign degree) – agencies worked for me – orientation program provided the base – “cold calling” – started volunteering and networking which greatly help – process takes time but worked together in the end – now I can help newcomers
- Story about my wife – found it difficult to break barrier of working women – let my wife go ahead of me to obtain her home childcare certificate – would escort her on the subway to

ECE program – volunteered with ESL and LINC program and took a nutrition course – combined 2 year ECE program and volunteering was able to get a job in a daycare – wanted to change career path and got job at a community living centre – went on to obtain masters and is now a Case Manager – stayed positive – got full time job with West Scarborough

(For full list of stories please see Slides #11-13)

### **Participants were then asked to overview the prominent themes from the Stories and Interviews**

#### What is already working for Newcomers

- Access to language classes
- When there are multi-services in one location it is best (one stop shopping)
- Many Services are Welcoming – building relationships, informal connection
- Some of the employment programs are helpful – re: placement opportunities
- Childcare programs – happy to see children being well cared for while they themselves are learning

#### What is wished for the future of Newcomers

- Make the Immigration Process - easier and faster (shorten wait times for reunions)
- Integrate Settlement Services
  - One Stop Shopping / All the services available in one place / Fewer referrals
  - Think about settlement like a curriculum – provide the right information at the right time tailored to the need of the newcomer
- Ensure newcomers are involved in defining services – ex. Resume writing not useful to all
- More support to enable the community help one another
- Improve Access to Information – Help newcomers find the information they need at the right place and time
- Ensure services are available at point of need – some mobile services
- Assessing credentials – improve the system – building awareness
- Agencies – share information to improve service – this is important!
- Employment – better connections with business
- Access to Education (post secondary) – making it more accessible
- Affordable Housing
- Focus on Basic Service AND Quality of life services

## 2. Creating a Vision for the Future – What Would an Ideal Experience Look Like

**Participants were then asked to discuss in small groups their ideal Newcomer experience then share with the entire group**

### Ideal Future for Newcomers

- All services are available upon arrival – including transportation
- Representatives to go to newcomers place of resident
- Local residents help newcomers with day-to-day errands and take them to service providers
- Pair a resident with newcomers so they can ask questions and get support – shopping, banking, finding housing etc.
- Community Hub – where there is health services and many others
- Follow up phone call to make sure newcomers get package and check to see if they need any help
- Skill development
- Pre-arrival –shift many services to this phase to make transition more effective
  - Canadian embassies conducting orientation sessions
  - Credential Assessments for trained professional
  - Distribute qualified immigrants according to professional background to appropriate city (not after they are settled in Toronto)
  - “Big party” – barbecues organized by the residents to strengthen neighbourhood
- Pre- Arrival – Immigration Centre sends landing papers and general information ahead of landing in Canada - this is the critical time for newcomers
- Landing
  - Have a CIC representative there to welcome newcomer– municipal, professional or federal government direct involvement
  - No package at this stage
  - Within first week they are going to Civic Centre – settlement helpdesk located there – apply for SIN and get an information package about their area of settlement, ex. Scarborough – include audio and video materials too
- Post - Arrival – Newcomer Settlement Agency Desk - agencies at airport and leave contact information – provide websites (in different languages), listed in yellow pages etc. – for specific information
- Settlement agencies follow up with them to refer them to local community

- Post - Arrival – go to Community Centre like ACSA – provide regular activities for newcomers, learn what support they need
- On-going process until they are settled
- Smooth settlement process
  - One-stop shop – jobs, health housing, education, tourist attractions, holidays etc.
  - Individual contact person given to the newcomers at the airport
  - Customized action planning for them to set their goals
  - Home visits by community members
  - People who've been living here to have kind and encouraging words – accepting of newcomers – positive message from the community
  - Intensify the mentorship programs that truly meet the needs of the newcomers – has to be well matched
  - More government grants to support education, affordable housing
  - Incentives for employers so they're encouraged to hire newcomers
  - Highlight success stories in info given to newcomers
- Newcomers being channeled to the right place – official counter (or an official) at the airport
- Welcome centre in every district – to get all info from that centre – not necessarily all the services, but the one-stop shopping with all info
- Services for newcomers' business owners - Immigrants that are starting businesses – good work environment for newcomers to work – how to deal with strikes etc.

### 3. Creating High Level Recommendations for Our Settlement Strategy

#### **Participants then came up with the underlying Themes and Recommendations**

- Arrival comprehensive package – what's in it and when the newcomer gets it
- Individualized personal contact – for support and follow up - follow-up/check in point
- Everyone is able to customizing the experience – assessment of needs (developing this skill)- recognizing that people have different timelines
- Community support – how to design this program e.g. buddy system, mentorship
- Clarifying what the community does vs. what the government does vs. what the agencies do
- Community hub/welcome centre – “one stop shop”
- Neighbourhood gatherings

**Questions were then generated from the themes and recommendation that need to be further examined**

- a. What would the ideal newcomer curriculum be?
- b. What should integrated settlement services look like to generate the one-stop-shop experience?
- c. What would be happening if we enabled the community to help one another? What support is needed?
- d. How do we engage newcomers in designing services more? (with newcomers vs. to newcomers)
- e. How do we know that we're providing the best services we can? (What should we be measuring?)
- f. How do we raise the bar of all of our services to the level of "best"?

#### **4. Next Steps for the S/L'Am Project**

**The facilitator explained what S/L'Am Project will do next**

- Partnership Council to Review what was discussed in the Community Summit
- Refine Working Groups (Clusters) To:
  - Explore Topics and Ideas More Fully
  - Create Recommended Strategies

**Participants were asked if they would like to be sent updates over the next few months. Project Manager gave closing remarks and thanked participants for their attendance.**