

North West Scarborough Local Immigration Partnership

Team 1: Welcome & Access to Information

Meeting Minutes

Location: Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto, 2600 Birchmount Rd.

Date: June 29th, 2010

Attendees: Jorge Silvestri (MNLCT), Helen Yang (YMCA Newcomers Centre), Lucy Ren (Resident), Mani Mahadeva (NWS LIP), Michelle Davis (NWS LIP)

1. Welcoming

Regrets: Lee Soda, Suleka Sathi, Mary Sharif, & Hanna Cabaj

2. Updates – Planning Session # 4 & Team progress (Please see Planning Session #4 meeting minutes)

In addition to what was discussed at the Planning Session #4, Team 1 members came up with the following:

How do you get information out to potential clients? And how effective are those methods?

- need to utilize the mainstream media and use a “gun-shot” approach to disseminate information about and for newcomers.
- using this method will get information to various segments of society residing in all areas of the GTA, even globally to those seeking to migrate to Canada

How do we use the community groups to get our message out and promote referrals?

- use traditional methods of pamphlets, flyers, brochures, etc., but remember word of mouth is a very strong method, and reaching out to libraries, dental/doctors’ offices, grocery store bulletin boards, malls are also effect locations to reach potential clients

What other vehicles should we use to share information and get the message out?

- Education through agency to agency – invite other agencies to train staff, invite guest speakers to workshops from outside sources

3. Review and Match Team “Outputs” and Recommendations

All agreed on the outputs for Team 1 that were discussed previous to today’s meeting

Feedback from Recommendations:

Pre-arrival (CIC Website)

- 1) Finding relevant and important websites linked to the CIC website is difficult and complicated. It would be best to have related sites on the main page listed under a subject category heading and then have the link to the website underneath, or have a page dedicated to a specific subject with a list of relevant websites linked.

- 2) The list of services to click on from the drop-down box needs to be improved with more options. Presently the list of service agencies is very limited, and does not include non-profit organizations or social services other than government.
- 3) The option for finding work (on the first page) leads to “Service Canada” and “Working in Canada”, which is limited in information and does not provide direct services to newcomers. Also, neither link takes the user to non-profit organizations helping newcomers to find job. Currently, users have to click on “Finding Help” to get information about non-profit organizations. Therefore, “Finding Job” should be linked to government, private sector, and non-profit organizations that help newcomers.
- 4) When searching for information on service agencies specific to newcomers there should be a list of agencies serving all types of newcomers, (e.g. Refugees – currently not available) although some of the agencies listed do help refugees but is not clearly stated.
- 5) There is a “Finding Help” option on the main page of “Before Arrive” that will lead you to list of services. Then you have to click numerous times to get to agencies that help newcomers. It should be rearranged so that there are many different options on one page to select “province”, “city”, “category of the user”, and so on, breaking down into different categories. The results page should show both government and non-government institutions providing the selected services.
- 6) We recommend that settlement service providers regularly update their website information provided to the CIC in order to provide the correct information to newcomers. CIC can possibly give access to agencies allowing them to update their organizations information regularly directly on the CIC website. There should also be an option to search for area specific service providers linked to a map; so that a newcomer migrating to a certain area can see what services are available there and choose the one located closest. Though the website has an option now, most of the agencies listed are the head offices address only.
- 7) Currently the CIC website gives citizens the option to become involved with settlement service providers as volunteering to mentor only, but on the service provider websites the option to volunteer is not limited to just volunteering for mentorship. This discrepancy needs to be fixed to reflect all volunteering opportunities. (e.g. Becoming a member of a board of directors or professional volunteering)
- 8) There are no agencies providing free French language training for newcomers in Toronto listed on the CIC website, which should be an option added to the drop-down box.
- 9) There are no links to important websites such as: 211.ca (Community services), www.toronto.ca/311/ (City services), and 411.ca (Yellow Pages) and www.51.ca (popular Chinese information site)

Arrival Package:

- 1) Arrival package available at the airport should be more comprehensive – including detailed information with more options listed for new arrivals.
- 2) Package of written material of information and instructions on daily activities (such as banking, taking public transportation) needs to be included.
- 3) Flyers/Brochures of different settlement agencies should be included in the arrival package or a sheet with physical and website addresses of agencies and welcome centres specific to the area of settlement. Terminology and wording used should be simplified so that it is easily legible for newcomers.
- 4) Full-time staff or a computerized kiosk to distribute information specific to the city or area a person will reside in; and to assist newcomers upon arrival to help with immediate needs and answer basic questions. (e.g. Find out where is he/she going to stay and provide a printed list of services in that particular area)
- 5) Located at welcome centres or civic centres there should be access to the internet so newcomers can obtain information on different services for short and long term needs.
- 6) Quicker access to information about telephone services, cable, internet, public transportation systems need to be given upon arrival. Good examples are: www.mto.gov.ca, and www.realsophy.com, which provide information on the Ontario transit system, and on local businesses, services, attractions, and various facilities

available in the GTA. Currently, there are numerous cultural and ethnic specific directories and websites that exist with information about businesses, facilities, and services.

4. Explore Other Areas not Included in the Recommendations

- 1) **Welcome centres** need to have staff that are stream line trained and educated on the services available in the specific area that the welcome centre is located in. All welcome centres should be the same in name and signage in order to maintain consistency and be easily recognizable anywhere.

There should be a newcomer processing guide available in all welcome centres. This should include guidelines on how:

- to manage the cost of printing of multi-lingual materials
- roles of welcoming staff that include assessing the needs of clients, refer them to either settlement worker of the same agency or another appropriate agency/ agencies

Welcome centers should provide options to the client to decide whether they will continue with their initial welcome centre or go to another agency that many better serve their needs, keeping the clients best interest in mind.

Council will have to develop job description for welcome centre staff.

- 2) **Community Welcoming**

- Community awareness and training on available newcomer services
- How to handle newcomers
- Knowledge of limitations
- Understand the cultural practices of newcomers

5. Closing

Team 1 meetings for the months of July and August are postponed and will resume in September.