

TORONTO SOUTH LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

NOTES – COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, Sept 28, 2017

10 am – noon

WoodGreen Community Services, 815 Danforth Ave

Agenda:

1. **Welcome, Introductions**
2. **Sector and TSLIP News**
3. **Policy Issues for 2017: Scan and discussion**
4. **Review and Approval of Council, Executive and Working Group TORs**
5. **Election of Executive**
6. **Speaker on Diversity and Anti-Racism issues**
7. **End of Meeting**

IN ATTENDANCE	
ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Access Alliance	Axelle Janczur
ACCESS Employment	Suzana Belan
Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture	Teresa Dremetsikas
Canadian Centre for Language and Cultural Studies	Dawn Michael
COSTI	Trudy Small
CultureLink	Terry Baker
Family Services Toronto	Sophia Ali
Neighbourhood Legal Services	Jennifer Stone
Neighbourhood Legal Services	Hebatullah Isa-Odidi
Parkdale Community Information Centre	Cassandra Wong
Toronto Centre for Education and Training	Shelly Pludwinski
Toronto District Schoolboard	Sevgul Topkara-Sarsu
Toronto Newcomer Office	Muna Gaye
WoodGreen Community Services	Kay Brenders

West Neighbourhood House	Shaida Addetia
St.Stephen's Community House	Bill Sinclair
WoodGreen Community Services	Diane Dyson
Social Planning Toronto	Sean Meagher
IRCC	Rebecca Nava
LIP PROJECT TEAM	
CCVT	Giovanni Rico
St. Stephen's Community House	Paulina Wyrzykowski
Woodgreen Community Services	Sandra Guerra

Facilitation: Paulina Wyrzykowski, TSLIP Project Director with support from other TSLIP staff.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Participants were welcomed. Agenda was introduced. Everyone introduced themselves, named their organizations and their role.

2. Sector and TSLIP News

The TSLIP director quickly reviewed TSLIP activities since the last Council Meeting in May (please refer to presentation for more detail). She then highlighted several issues relevant to the sector, specifically:

- Possible Legal Aid Cuts

Earlier this year LAO announced they had a shortfall, would cut services to newcomers by July 1. This was postponed to November 1. The Federal government contributes about 7million annually to LAO for refugees, the number of claims dropped in 2013, but is now rising again and complexity of cases has increased. LAO has offered informal assurances that cuts will not come into effect, thanks in part to Law Foundation funding which they have just received. However, this issue will return as the number of claims rises and government looks at ways of streamlining the refugee determination system.

- Creation of Settlement and Integration Sector

The Settlement Network and the Settlement and Integration Policy branches have been brought together under one Assistant Deputy Minister. The Deputy Minister is David Manicom. This is intended to create a single point of accountability for the strategic vision and oversight of the department's settlement and integration policy, programs and operations, leading to tighter connection between policy and implementation of settlement programs; David Manicom has reached out to OCASI: wants to improve communication both internally and with external stakeholders including provinces and territories as well as the service sector. The department is also looking at a major overhaul of the Contribution Agreement reporting requirements, monitoring, budget lines, contracting procedures, etc.

- Increased demand for shelter space in Toronto

The number of refugees up in shelters, numbers not properly desegregated to differentiate between refugees, refugee claimants, and permanent residents who used to be refugees. 3 new hotels have been added to house refugees – 250 more rooms, the City wants 50 more by year's end. There are 20 households on waitlist for shelter space at any given point, wait time 1-5 business days. Top source countries: Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Afghanistan and Bahamas. Average length of stay is 3 months. There is need for a long term plan that takes into account ebbs and flows of people into city.

- Filling out of Immigration Forms (section 91 of IRPA)

There is confusion in the sector regarding the interpretation of IRPA section 91, which prohibits anyone who is not a lawyer or immigration consultant from providing assistance or advice in immigration matters for consideration. Settlement agencies need to know if this includes settlement workers assisting with the completion of immigration forms. In the fall of 2016, IRCC issued the following statement:

There is huge recognition that the sector provides and plays a critical role. Right now settlement staff can provide limited assistance with their (clients') immigration application forms and they will not be contravening the Act. Before the end of the year (2016) the Department hope to post the program delivery instructions so that SPOs will have more clarity. There is recognition of the flexibility you (the sector) needs. This also includes SAHs (Sponsorship Agreement Holders).

Urged to clarify further, another statement was issued by IRCC in early September 2017:

IRCC-funded staff are not to provide citizenship or immigration advice, or act as a representative at any stage of a citizenship or immigration application or proceeding for these clients. And, under no circumstances are IRCC- funded staff to assist in the preparation of documents pertaining to asylum claims.

This phrasing still leaves room for confusion around what forms it is appropriate for settlement workers to assist with filling if they do not act as a representative. Jenny Stone from Neighbourhood Legal Services provided further background to this issue, and directed members to IRCC stakeholder guidelines which can be found at:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/tools/service/rep/stakeholders.asp>

She further expressed that these guidelines do not solve the underlying problem with Section 91 or IRPA itself, which is overbroad. She let the group know that the Inter Clinic Immigration Working Group deputed on the issue to the House of Commons, where the submission became part of the report on Immigration Consultants. As a result of their submission, RECOMMENDATION 11 of the report reads:

“That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada amend section 91 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in order to clarify that non-governmental organizations, such as settlement agencies, will not be subject to sanctions for offering basic immigration services.”

3. Policy Issues for 2017: Scan and discussion

Council Members were asked to contribute policy priorities to be considered as projects for the Systemic Issues Working Group (please see list of potential issues, attached).

4. Review and Approval of Council, Executive and Working Group TORs

The director reviewed TSLIP structure and gave a quick summary of the Terms of Reference for the Council, Executive Committee and Working Groups at the TSLIP (full drafts sent out to members ahead of meeting). Members voted to approve the TORs, as follows:

LIP Council TOR

Moved by: Shaida Addetia

Seconded by: Jan Carter

Approved

Executive Committee TOR

(with the amendment that this current Executive would sit until April 30, 2019)

Moved by: Cassandra Wong

Seconded by: Jennifer Stone

Approved

Health and Mental Health, Settlement Services and Social Inclusion Working Groups TOR

Moved by: Axelle Janczur

Seconded by: Dawn Michael

Approved

Systemic Issues and Social Change Working Group TOR

Moved by: Axelle Janczur

Seconded by: Kay Brenders

Approved

5. Election of Executive

A slate of nominees for the Executive Committee was presented and approved by Council, as follows:

The following slate was presented:

Axelle Janczur, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

Debbie Hill-Corrigan, Sojourn House

Lisa Randall, CultureLink

Catherine McNeely, Newcomer Women's Services Toronto

Moved by: Bill Sinclair

Seconded by: Cassandra Wong

There was discussion of the need to consider diversity and succession planning when choosing Executive Committee members – the topic was slated for discussion at the first Executive Committee Meeting.

6. Speaker on Diversity and Anti-Racism issues

Gilary Massa, Advocacy Coordinator at the National Council of Canadian Muslims presented on the issue of Islamophobia and what newcomer serving agencies could do to make Muslim newcomers feel welcome.

8. End of Meeting