

TORONTO SOUTH LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

NOTES – COUNCIL MEETING

*Thursday, November 30, 10:00 am to Noon
Centre for Social Innovation
720 Bathurst St., First Floor “Garage”*

Agenda:

1. Welcome, Introductions
2. Sector and TSLIP News
3. Working Group Projects
4. Intersections between Settlement and Indigenous Rights: A Conversation
5. End of Meeting

IN ATTENDANCE	
ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
Access Alliance	Axelle Janczur
ACCESS Employment	Suzana Belan
Afghan Women’s Organization	Sogol Zand
Aids Committee of Toronto	Stella Osagie
Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture	Teresa Dremetsikas
Canadian Centre for Language and Cultural Studies	Dawn Michael
COSTI	Trudy Small
CultureLink	Lisa Randall
George Brown College	Jan Carter
Kensington Bellwoods Community Legal Services	Tim Maxwell
Righting Relations	Rehana Tejpar
Toronto Centre for Education and Training	Shelly Pludwinski
Toronto Public Health	Lisa King
Toronto Newcomer Office	Muna Gaye
University Settlement	Grace Yeung
West Neighbourhood House	Shaida Addetia

St.Stephen's Community House	Bill Sinclair
WoodGreen Community Services	Diane Dyson
Working Women Community Centre	Vanda Henriques
YMCA	Sarita Bhatta
LIP PROJECT TEAM	
St. Stephen's Community House	Paulina Wyrzykowski
Social Planning Toronto	Laura Buccioni
Woodgreen Community Services	Sandra Guerra

Facilitation: Paulina Wyrzykowski, TSLIP Project Director
Sandra Guerra, TSLIP Communications and Knowledge Translation

1. Welcome and Introductions

Participants were welcomed. Agenda was introduced. Everyone introduced themselves, named their organizations and their role, and mentioned at least one recent trend they had noticed in the communities they work and serve in.

Some of the trends mentioned included:

- Receiving more clients with higher language benchmarks
- An increase in sponsorship processing
- Settlement supports happening through early years programs, and the need to recognize settlement support as a service provided by early years centres/programs
- Significant workload increase now that new citizenship applications have come out; workers don't have time for any other work
- Burden of reporting requirements impacting workloads
- Increase in legal cases for refugee claimants who were denied and are now filing on humanitarian or compassionate grounds
- Rise of overt racism and white supremacy
- Increasing focus on employment and economic development for newcomers
- More clients are accessing and in need of mental health supports
- Syrian refugees turning to cash economy after 13 month point, feeling discouraged/unmotivated from entering the workforce

- Increasing use of and access to PrEP now that it is available through drug plans
- Settlement sector does not appear to be following the trend of other sectors to address the opioid crisis and pursue harm reduction training and policy development
- Mental health is showing up as a barrier to access services not directly related to mental wellness
- Mental health for women who are immigrants and/or have experience of domestic violence is a persistent but also resurging issue
- Positive interest from Indigenous community in engaging with newcomer community
- Employment centres seeing more and more students as early as high school and throughout college and past graduation; less stigma associated with the service
- Immigrant women are still needing more supports

2. Sector and TSLIP News

The TSLIP director highlighted several issues relevant to the sector and asked for feedback on each of the issues:

Three Year Levels Plan 2018-2020

On November 1, 2017 the IRCC announced the government's multi-year immigration levels plan. Overall there's an increase in permanent residents welcomed each year, approaching the 1% population target the sector has been pushing for. There are no real shifts in the number of people coming in by immigration category. Although there's an overall increase planned for each category, the director called attention to the reduced target number of caregivers.

Since the announcement, various umbrella bodies and agencies have inquired about increased funding to serve the increasing population of newcomers, but IRCC's response has not been conclusive, indicating that there are as of yet no commitments to additional funding, and that funding levels may not increase. The director highlighted two big asks from the sector considering the three-year levels plan: increase settlement funding amounts, and provide three-year funding agreements that allow funds to be carried over year-to-year, rather than renegotiating annual contracts. She noted earlier that the IRCC has heard from the sector that the administrative burden of reporting requirements are impacting service, and have committed to addressing this issue.

Action: Director to follow up with the group in answering a question raised by one of the members: are there other government bodies that issue multi-year contracts with the ability to carry over funds year to year?

The director also briefly explained the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, which applicants can apply to from outside and also from within Atlantic Canada. She noted that it is worthwhile for settlement workers to know about that program and consider letting clients who might benefit know about it.

The director asked the Council if they felt anything else should be considered regarding the three year levels plan. Responses included:

- In addition to increasing funding, funding formulas and allocations should be looked at; allocations to administration, professional development, capacity, and mental health (services?) were specifically mentioned
- Considering how the sector, working with IRCC, can improve on collecting quality data
- Stressed the importance of advocating for funding that is adequate for covering core costs and existing programs and services, while accounting for increasing client population, and that is also consistently applied across the sector according to sector guidelines, not according to separate agreements between IRCC and individual organizations. Ottawa needs to address the inequities in how IRCC deals with agreements between organizations.

COIA

The new COIA signed last week was in many ways a shell agreement with annexes that have not been finalized. Many details need to be worked out.

Generally, this COIA is less about funding adjustments or allocations, and is more focused on streamlining interactions on and between federal and provincial levels. In particular, the settlement annex of this COIA is concerned with: addressing program duplication; aligning grants programs; and developing a joint evaluation framework. The agreement also includes a commitment to new funds for bridge training (refer to the presentation for more details).

The director reviewed some key concerns and opportunities for the sector:

- Apparent duplication according to government ministries is not always really program duplication. For example, different immigrant status groups may be eligible for one version of the same program and not the other, depending on which body funds it.
- Will information sharing be at the client or program level?

- The sector has asked that the federal government provide provinces with advance information about government assisted refugees so they know what to expect earlier on.
- There is indication that one of the annexes will include a section specifically on mental health, and especially for women, seniors, and youth.

Acknowledging the importance of and broad concern for the program duplication piece, the director invited members to voice any additional concerns. There was a discussion about the importance of having both levels of government/funders invested in ensuring the sector has the infrastructure it needs to meet the increasing demands for quality data collection.

Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act

The director briefly described Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, which passed on November 27th. (Refer to presentation for more details.) There was a discussion about the work that has been done leading up to this, which some attendees had been apart of, and a discussion about how members could make sure their agencies are good places to work, and how the Act could impact clients.

Members pointed out resources available through The Ontario Nonprofit Network's (ONN), in collaboration with the Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (RNC), that agencies could use to self-evaluate as employers and think about sector impacts: the [Decent Work Checklist](#) as part of the [Decent Work Toolkit](#).

There was also a discussion about the responsibility of federal and provincial governing/funding bodies to take this into account regarding how contribution agreements and funding practices impact agencies' abilities to provide decent work. For example, it was mentioned that agencies do not get IRCC funding for some of the types of leaves covered by provincial employment regulations. The director mentioned that OCASI is taking up this issue at provincial and federal levels.

Some members mentioned letters they and other agencies were preparing to send to federal and provincial ministries about this issue, and it was suggested that these advocacy efforts be shared and coordinated.

3. Working Group Projects (Sandra)

Sandra Guerra, TSLIP staff, reminded members that they could find information about TSLIP working groups and committees on the TSLIP website (www.torontolip.com) by clicking on the "Council & Committees" drop-down list. She then provided an update on the projects of the following working groups and committees: Toronto Newcomer

Council, Social Inclusion, Health and Mental Health, Systemic Issues and Social Change. Please refer to the presentation for more details.

On the topic of mental health, members discussed the expectations for agency staff regarding mental health screenings and referrals, particularly around whether or not staff are expected to do assessments. The discussion clarified that the focus is on improving understanding about mental health issues, how to talk about clients' mental health, and how mental health intersects with other issues and access to services, specifically within the settlement sector.

Resources mentioned included: Hong Fook Mental Health Association; CAMH; Mental Health First Aid Canada.

4. Intersections between Settlement and Indigenous Rights: A Conversation

The director highlighted the role the settlement might play in building relationships between newcomers and Indigenous people, and advocating for Indigenous Rights. She quickly reviewed the “Newcomers to Canada” section of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s [94 Calls to Action](#) (see the presentation for summaries of each recommendation). She recognized that some areas of the country, specifically out West, are further along in responding to these calls to action than we are in Ontario.

Rehana Tejpar, Public Educator with Righting Relations, spoke about bridge-building work she’s done between newcomer and Indigenous communities, and guided the group through conversational exercises that encouraged reflecting on why and how to support bridge-building work between newcomer and Indigenous communities, and the settlement sector. She referred attendees to resources available at RightingRelations.org.

5. End of Meeting