
MEMORANDUM

October 28, 2011

TO: Members of Council

CC: Mayor's Working Group on Immigration
City Manager
Corporate Management Team

FROM: Mayor Gregor Robertson

SUBJECT: REPORT OF THE MAYOR'S WORKING GROUP ON IMMIGRATION 2009-2011
RTS# 9384

I am pleased to enclose a copy of the "Report of the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration 2009-2011".

The Mayor's Working Group report outlines key activities and initiatives undertaken by the City and community partners over the past two years in the area of immigration-related issues at a local level. The report also includes recommendations on next steps for Council's consideration.



Gregor Robertson
MAYOR

DATE: October 20, 2011

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Dan Hiebert & Councillor Geoff Meggs
Co-Chairs, Mayor's Working Group on Immigration

SUBJECT: Report from Mayor's Working Group on Immigration 2009-2011

PURPOSE

To provide City Council with an Activity report (November 2009- September 2011) and recommendations of the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration.

BACKGROUND

The Mayor's Working Group on Immigration (MWGI) was established in 2005. Its mandate is to: 1) recommend key policy and program directions regarding immigration issues at a local level; 2) advise on issues arising from Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Big Cities Mayors Caucus Immigration table and others; 3) provide opportunity for City of Vancouver and community partners to have input in the development of immigration programs and policies, including undertaking research.

In 2009, Mayor Gregor Robertson re-established the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration. Professor Miu Chung Yan (from Nov 2009-Sept 2010), Professor Dan Hiebert (Sept 2010 - present) and Councillor Geoff Meggs (2009-present) were appointed as co-chairs. Eighteen individuals were appointed to the Working Group, based on sectoral representation and expertise in the areas of immigration. Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Park Board representatives joined the Working Group for the first time. (Appendix A).

The MWGI held ten regular meetings between November 2009 and July 2011.

DISCUSSION

Changing demographics

The City of Vancouver is increasingly a city of immigrants. The 2006 census showed that 45% of Vancouver residents are foreign-born. B.C. Stats reports that 44,420 immigrants arrived in Vancouver between 1991 and 1996, 42,580 arrived between 1996 and 2000, and 43,470 arrived between 2001 and 2006. In total, 130,470 immigrants, or 50% of Vancouver's total immigrant population, has arrived in this 15-year period.

Between 2001 and Census day in May, 2006, the largest immigrant groups arriving in Vancouver were the People's Republic of China (15,640 or 36%), Philippines (5,320 or 12.2%) and India (2,090 or 4.8%). The immigrant population is also a very young one.

Over one quarter of all immigrants to BC in 2006 were children and youth, and only 9% were 55 years and older.

Priority Areas

In 2005, the Working Group, based on consultation with diverse stakeholders, identified six Priority Areas for the City to consider in addressing immigration related issues. They are:

- 1) Developing a Vision and Value Statement
- 2) Policy and Program Development
- 3) Employment, Economics and Education
- 4) Access to Services
- 5) Support to refugees
- 6) Integration, Engagement and Anti-Racism

These areas continue to inform the discussion of MWGI.

In 2007, the Working Group identified some further steps to implement each of the priority areas. One significant action undertaken was the convening of the Metro Vancouver Leaders Summit on Immigrant Employment Issues, which took place in September 2008. The Summit launched the B.C. Immigrant Employment Council which continues to address systemic and policy issues related to immigrant employment in B.C.

A. Taking action - three initiatives

At the outset of MWGI meetings in 2009, Mayor Robertson requested the group to consider three key areas:

- Monitor and report on the City's efforts to include recent immigrants in its workforce;
- Make recommendations to the City on measures to increase understanding and links between First Nations, Aboriginal citizens and immigrant communities;
- Advise and make recommendations to the City on the impact of new immigration policies such as the evolution of temporary foreign workers' programs, and report on the impact of these programs in the areas of housing and support services.

In response, the Working Group adopted the following actions:

- 1) Support the City's efforts to set up a Newcomers Mentorship pilot project in partnership with interested community groups, and evaluate the impact of such a program on recent immigrant professionals and the City.
- 2) Support the implementation of the Vancouver Dialogues Project which aims to strengthen relations and understanding between First Nations, urban Aboriginal community and immigrant communities;
- 3) Undertake a special project with the goal of increasing public understanding of the impact of temporary foreign workers on the city.

Three initiatives were undertaken over the next eighteen months: the Newcomers Mentorship pilot project, the Vancouver Dialogues Project and a multi-media project

on temporary foreign workers. All three projects were completed by the fall of 2011. Description of each initiative and outcomes is provided later in the report.

B. Issues and follow-up

The following highlight some issues raised by MWGI and actions that followed:

- Discussed the impact of proposed changes to Bill C-11 concerning refugee claims and process. The Bill's more contentious proposals were amended later by the Federal Government and no action was required.
- Discussion on mentorship models and potential interest to partner with the Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. (IEC of BC). IEC of BC was later invited to be a partner in the Newcomers Mentorship pilot project.
- Discussion with provincial representatives on the Pan-Canadian Framework on Foreign Credentials. The information was useful in further discussing immigrant employment challenge.
- Discussion with Federal representatives on the topic of Foreign Credential Recognition. The information was useful in further discussing immigrant employment challenge.
- Discussion on the situation facing Tamil boat refugees. Staff followed up with agency supporting the refugees to ensure there were adequate resources.
- Discussion on impact of restructuring of employment service centres on newcomers. Mayor Robertson wrote to the Provincial Minister asking for an extension of deadline for submitting community's input/comments.
- Reviewing and providing comments on draft Social Policy Discussion paper on Immigrants and Refugees. Social Policy incorporated MWGI comments in the final version of the paper.
- Discussion with MOSAIC and Multicultural Helping House on initiatives related to assisting temporary foreign workers. The information was helpful to launch the multi-media project on Temporary Foreign Workers.
- Discussion with Federal representatives on the topic of Temporary Foreign Workers Program. MWGI will engage with Federal government in further discussion on TFW program and future direction.

C. Mayor's Public Engagement

Mayor Robertson was also invited to give address at the following events:

- Opening address at the National Metropolis Conference
- Opening remarks for the Maytree Foundation National Allies Conference
- Opening remarks at World Refugee Day
- Opening remarks at the City's Newcomers Mentorship Pilot Project events;
- Opening Remarks at Vancouver Dialogues events

D. Roundtable with Federation of Canadian Municipalities

A special roundtable was convened on September 27, 2011, to welcome President Berry Vrbanovic of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) during his visit to Vancouver and to discuss a recently launched FCM report titled 'Standing on Solid Ground: the Municipal Role in Immigrant Settlement'. MWGI agreed with the recommendations of that report especially on the significance of affordable housing and better public transit for newcomers.

E. World Refugee Day

A World Refugee Day event is key in educating the general public about the challenges facing refugees and reducing societal misconceptions or stigma about refugees. MWGI has recommended that the City officially include World Refugee Day as an Annual Event for the City.

On October 18, 2011, City Council approved a motion to designate World Refugee Day as a Special Event for the City of Vancouver. As stated in the motion, a World Refugee Day event will represent the spirit of inclusiveness, intercultural understanding and community harmony that are all important to the City.

Three Key Initiatives

The following provided a more detailed description including impact/outcome of each of the three initiatives supported by MWGI:

1. Newcomers Mentorship Pilot Project

This pilot initiative was officially launched in January 2011. Project partners included: City of Vancouver, MOSAIC, Immigrant Services Society of B.C., SUCCESS and the Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. Over a four-month period, nineteen professional city staff in the areas of Engineering, IT and Finance, were matched as mentors with nineteen newcomer professionals(mentees).

The pilot project was successfully completed in May 2011. A special event was organized to recognise the accomplishment of mentors and mentees and all the partners' contribution towards the project.

Results

An independent evaluation group was hired to assess the overall impact and outcomes of the pilot. Surveys with mentees and mentors, and in depth interviews with project partners, were key approaches used in the evaluation.

The evaluation showed some earlier-than-anticipated employment outcomes for newcomer professionals. By the end of the pilot, eight mentees had found or improved their employment. Three month post pilot, ten mentees found or improved their employment. City staff indicated that mentoring contributed to their understanding of newcomers and their challenges and the experience sharpened their own leadership and coaching skills. The outcomes indicated benefits to both mentees and the City.

The pilot has also inspired other local governments to consider undertaking similar projects. City staff have been approached by other local governments to provide more information about the pilot. It is expected that similar mentorship initiatives will be adopted by other interested local governments in the near future.

2. Vancouver Dialogues Project

In 2007, MWGI proposed the following in its "Vision and Value Statement Concerning Immigrants and Refugees" (Appendix B) which was adopted by City Council:

“While immigration has traditionally been under federal and provincial jurisdiction, most immigrants in Canada live in cities. It is therefore increasingly important that cities play an integral role in advocating for the inclusion of newcomers in Canadian society.

This goal of inclusion is understood to be consistent with our existing commitment to honour and value the role of First Nations as the initial occupants of Canada....”

The above statement underpins the City’s interest to propose to the Provincial Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program for a Demonstration Project on bringing First Nations, urban Aboriginal and immigrant communities together. The City was successful in obtaining provincial funding to launch the Vancouver Dialogues Project in March 2010.

The Vancouver Dialogues Project has the key goals of promoting increased understanding and stronger relationships between indigenous and immigrant communities within the city, providing opportunities for intercultural learning and facilitating relationship building.

The Project was guided by a Project Steering Group with representation from a broad range of groups, including local First Nations, urban Aboriginal organizations, immigrant settlement organizations, educational institutions, Neighbourhood Houses, and other interested groups. MWGI is a member of the Project Steering Group.

Between March 2010 and July 2011, the following key project components were accomplished:

- An official project launch and a closing celebratory event
- Convening of nine dialogue circles
- Hosting of twelve cultural exchange visits
- Literature review and an online survey
- Youth engagement in all aspects of project
- An Elder/Youth Program
- Publication of a Dialogues book and video

In total, over two thousand people had engaged with and contributed to the Dialogues project.

Results

A formal evaluation was conducted for the entire project. Throughout the process, participants were asked to provide feedback on whether they felt the various events/projects had been successful at achieving anticipated outcomes. The evaluation findings suggest that the project was successful at achieving its anticipated outcomes, with a high degree of satisfaction reported by participants:

- Events/programs fulfilled their reasons for participating;
- The information presented through events/programs was useful;
- The events/programs brought together diverse participants from different sectors;

- Diverse perspectives were valued and encouraged throughout events/programs;
- Satisfied with quality of information, choice of venues, and amount of time devoted to events/programs.

Due to the success of the project, the Province has agreed to continue support a second phase of the Dialogues Project. Phase II will focus on implementing ideas raised by project participants and Steering Group, such as more emphasis on youth engagement, identifying ways of presenting First Nations information to new citizens, developing a resource guide for organizing cultural exchange visits, and supporting the development of a community garden project which involves local First Nations and newcomers.

3. Multi-media Project - Foreign Workers/Local Neighbours

Partly due to the economic boom in the 2000's, a growing need for highly specialized workers, and labour shortages in some industries, the number of temporary foreign workers (TFWs) arriving in B.C. has seen sharp increases in recent years. In both B.C. and Vancouver, the number of TFWs has almost doubled since 2005 and more than tripled in the past decade. In 2009, there were 69,105 TFWs in British Columbia, and more than half (54%=37,876) were in Metro Vancouver. The number of TFWs arriving now equals or exceeds that of permanent residents. This shift in number has significant implications for businesses, workers, communities and governments.

To better understand the impact of TFWs on the city and local communities, MWGI sponsored a multi-media initiative with three key components:

- 1) Create a short documentary film that introduces a general audience to the issues of TFWs, and profile foreign workers in various occupational areas including high and low skilled occupations;
- 2) Host a film screening and community forum open to the public, and publicize the event through a website and through diverse social media;
- 3) Based on public comments and information received from the website, prepare a list of recommendations to the MWGI for further discussion and follow-up.

Further, to provide context and up-to-date information for the initiative's public launch and discussion, Metropolis B.C. agreed to research, compile and produce Fact Sheets on Temporary Foreign Residents and Temporary Foreign Workers. Three sets of Fact Sheets were produced and included on the multi-media website and eventually became available to the community at large.

The initiative was officially launched at a Community Forum on May 28, 2011 at the Vancouver Public Library. The event was attended by over two hundred and thirty people, with about half of the participants indicating they have little knowledge of TFW program. A 20-minute film called Foreign Workers/Local Neighbours (FW/LN) was premiered. This was followed by panel speakers comprising of MWGI members: Councillor Geoff Meggs, Zool Suleman and Cecilia Tagle. A former Live-in Care Worker, Junko, was also invited to share her story. A moderated discussion followed after the panel, with a number of speakers sharing emotional personal or family stories.

Results

Media coverage of the event included the Vancouver Sun, Ming Pao and Sing Tao Dailies, the Westender, Schema magazine, Open File, and Philippines Asia News. Over a three week period, the FW/LN website received over two thousand visits with five thousand page views. Further, the website blog received a number of guest submissions.

Overall, the FW/LN initiative was successful in raising awareness of the issues facing TFWs, promoting discussions among grassroots social media outlets, and helped identify some key areas of concern for TFWs and their families.

The project highlighted the complexity and range of issues that confront TFWs. Issues such as family separation, unfair treatment by employers, lack of knowledge about workers rights, fear of being sent back home, lack of access to local amenities and services, were all highlighted by Forum participants. The Live-in Care Program elicited the strongest comments from the audience, and is one of the areas which will need further discussions and dialogues among all stakeholders. It was also noted that employers need to be engaged in future discussion.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations from the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration for Council's consideration:

A. Newcomers Mentorship Project

Based on the pilot project and its evaluation, the MWGI recommends that the City:

- 1) Establishes a Newcomers Mentorship Program;
- 2) Liaises with other municipalities interested in establishing similar mentorship programs to promote a regional approach and best practices;
- 3) Requests that the Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. continue to be a partner in support of the City's Mentorship Program and to explore further outreach to other sectors including the corporate sector.

B. Building stronger links and relationships between newcomers and Aboriginal communities

Based on the positive outcomes of Phase I of the Vancouver Dialogues Project, MWGI recommends that the City:

- 1) Continues support Phase II of the Vancouver Dialogues in implementing legacy projects;
- 2) Disseminates materials such as the Dialogues book and video to interested communities and stakeholders;
- 3) Seeks partnership with other governments and stakeholders in promoting further dialogues between Aboriginal and newcomers communities in Vancouver and beyond.

C. Temporary Foreign Workers

Based on the TFW multi-media project and feedback from diverse stakeholders and sectors, MWGI recommends that the City:

1. Works with other municipalities to further identify the impact of Temporary Foreign Workers on cities and local communities;
2. Partners with research groups such as Metropolis to study the impact of TFWs in areas such as housing, education and access to services;

3. Collects information on best practices in addressing TFWs issues and needs and share information with other levels of governments.

D. Future Steps

MWGI had further discussions on next steps and future priorities, with the following recommendations:

- 1) That a Mayor's Working Group on Immigration continue under the auspices of the Mayor's office;
- 2) That the City examines effective models of engagement with Federal and Provincial government in addressing immigration-related issues;
- 3) That the next Working Group explores issues such as role of City in relation to the interests of economic class of immigrants and that of international students, both of whom constitute significant numbers residing in Vancouver;
- 4) That the next Working Group convenes a Roundtable of community leaders to develop next phase direction and priorities.

Appendix A

Mayor's Working Group on Immigration (MWGI) - Membership

MWGI Co-Chair: Professor Dan Hiebert (September 2010- present)
Councillor Geoff Meggs
Professor Miu Chung Yan (November 2009 - August 2010)

Liaison Councillor: Councillor George Chow

Vancouver School Board: Patti Bacchus, Chair

Vancouver Park Board: Raj Hundal, Commissioner

Community & Immigrant Services:

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of B.C. (AMSSA)- Tim Welsh
Filipino-Canadian New Era Society - Rey Umlas
Immigrant Services Society of B.C. - Patricia Woroch
MOSAIC - Eyob Naizghi
Multicultural Helping House, Tom Avedano
Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society PICS - Barry Goodwin
SUCCESS - Thomas Tam

Business/Employer:

Vancouver Board of Trade - Bernie Magnan

Academic/Research/Foundation:

Metropolis B.C. - Professor Dan Hiebert
Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada - Kenny Zhang

Refugee Issues:

Settlement Orientation Services SOS -Alexandra Charlton
Vancouver School Board Settlement Program: Cecilia Tagle

City's Multicultural Advisory Committee

Saeed Dyantkar

Members At Large:

Zool Suleman
Nick Noorani

Mayor's Office Liaison: Lara Honrado
Staff Liaison: Baldwin Wong, Social Policy

Appendix B

Vision and Value Statement Concerning Immigrant and Refugees

Preamble:

While immigration has traditionally been under federal and provincial jurisdiction, most immigrants in Canada live in cities. It is therefore increasingly important that cities play an integral role in advocating for the inclusion of newcomers in Canadian society.

This goal of inclusion is understood to be consistent with our existing commitment to honour and value the role of First Nations as the initial occupants of Canada, and the bilingual nature of Canada, respecting the significance of English and French as official languages.

VISION AND VALUE STATEMENT CONCERNING IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:

Vancouver is a city where immigrants and refugees have the best opportunities to become an integral part of the social, economic and cultural fabric of civic life.

Further:

The City of Vancouver is proud of its cultural diversity and values the distinctive characteristics of its residents, including newcomers to Canada;

The City of Vancouver is committed to fostering an open, welcoming and safe environment to people of all cultural backgrounds;

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that newcomers contribute to the social, cultural and economic vitality of Canadian society, locally and nationally, and that newcomers contribute to our relationships with other countries and cultures. Accordingly, Vancouver seeks ways to maximize newcomers' contributions to civic life, socially, culturally and economically.

The City of Vancouver will ensure that newcomers have equitable access to all the services provided by the City.

The City of Vancouver will help to ensure that newcomers have access to appropriate and timely settlement and integration services, by working in partnership with other orders of government and non-governmental organizations.

The City of Vancouver acknowledges its role with respect to a large number of visitors to Canada, including tourists, international students, and temporary migrants.