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SURREY LIP NEWSLETTER

Engaged & Inclusive

Members of the Surrey Immigrant Advisory Roundtable learning about each other at the first IAR meeting that took place on January 14, 2015.



The Service Ethic

The several dozen agencies providing services to Surrey's newcomers have developed in an organic way and are currently challenged by very dynamic conditions.

The City of Surrey covers 317 square kilometres—more than Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster combined. It's population is growing by about 9,000 people a year, and of those, 6,000 to 7,000 were born outside of Canada. These arrive from several dozen different countries and include B.C.'s largest refugee >



offer specific programs for newcomers while also striving to ensure that their many other offerings are as inclusive of immigrants and refugees as they are of the Canadian-born.

Just how many people are involved in providing newcomer services in Surrey? Nobody has a precise number, but in early 2014 a service workers event organized by the LIP's precursor, the Surrey Welcoming Communities Project, attracted 163 people from 46 agencies. Meanwhile, a service mapping project which is still in progress has already identified 230 projects and services (see LIP Updates on page 4 for further details).

Changes In The Air

There are several dynamics at work in the services field at the moment.

One sees multiple agencies cooperating to take on larger and more complex projects. The Moving Ahead Program is designed to assist immigrant and refugee individuals and families with multiple needs and significant integration barriers. It draws upon the combined efforts of DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, Options Community Services, Pacific Community Resources Society and Progressive Intercultural Community Services.

Another stems from recent changes in immigration regulations and the shift from provincial to federal responsibility for most settlement programs. On one hand, this has led to a focus on providing more coordination in service delivery—generally agreed upon by service providers as a desirable outcome, and one of the major focuses of the LIP. On the other, agencies have had to adapt to new processes and guidelines.

Another factor is the nature of immigration flows. "With fewer immigrants overall landing in British Columbia and funding shifting to the federal government, there will be a need for a more strategic approach in determining needs and the delivery of programs for newcomers," says Jennifer Kuenzig of the Douglas College Training Group. "Surrey is unique in that it continues to grow rapidly."

Connie Hong, of Options Community

(The Service Ethic: continued)

➤ population. Now, is it a surprise that the list of organizations providing newcomer services is large and diverse?

So is the list of services, of course. Citizenship and Immigration Canada includes language training, information and referrals, help finding employment that matches newcomers' skills and education, and help integrating into Canadian society among the types of services it helps fund with its Settlement Program. The program focuses on four areas: information and orientation; language training and skills development; labour market access; and welcoming communities. Through WelcomeBC the province provides additional funding, as do numerous community-based groups, whether with money or volunteer labour.

Within Surrey's Local Immigration Partnership almost all organizations represented on the steering committee offer

newcomer services of some kind. A few, such as DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and Progressive Intercultural Community Services, exist primarily to provide specialized services to immigrants and refugees. Other organizations, such as the Douglas College Training Group, have developed specific areas of expertise that make them sought after partners and contractors for the delivery of certain types of service, such as language instruction.

Organizations such as the Fraser Health Authority, the Surrey School Board and various departments within the City of Surrey provide a variety of services to ensure that their primary roles can be carried out as effectively and accessibly as possible — the Surrey School Board's Settlement Workers in Schools program, for example, works to ensure that the children of newcomers have an equal footing within the school system.

And then there are large "mainstream" service providers such as Options Community Services Society and the YMCA, which

(The Service Ethic: continued)

Services, points out that increasingly Surrey is a destination for immigrants moving from elsewhere in Metro Vancouver. Among other things that should drive home the point that “they’re not just immigrants, they’re residents of Surrey,” she says. “They have the same social issues as anyone else.”

Through its participation in the Moving Ahead program, Hong’s organization serves Surrey’s large population of refugees, with needs that are often quite distinct from those of most recent immigrants, who often arrive in Canada

with strong qualifications, as intended by changing immigration policies. But, she notes, immigrants often experience a harsher letdown, as troubles with language, professional certification and finding employment catch them by surprise. “Pre-arrival settlement services,” are a possible solution, she says.

Jennifer Kuenzig foresees increased emphasis on employment, noting that while many programs matching newcomers and employers are already in operation “I can see a shift to more specific in-demand type training and perhaps more consultation, needs analysis and customized training,” she says.

THE IMMIGRANT ADVISORY ROUNDTABLE

Fresh from their first meeting, the members are eager to tackle challenges.

It took Drastant Mehta only a few months to find a good job in his field of computer engineering after arriving in Metro Vancouver from Kenya in 2013, but, he says, that was only because “I had a lot of help from a lot of people. Now I want to help others in the same way. It’s a matter of personal ethics.”

In keeping with that, Mehta was one of 50 immigrants and refugees who applied to join the Surrey Local Immigration Project’s Immigrant Advisory Roundtable, and one of 19 selected. With Mohammad Ali and Mot Magdalena, he was elected one of three co-chairs by the group at its inaugural meeting, on January 14.

The Advisory Roundtable occupies a central role in the Partnership’s strategy, fulfilling three key roles: to provide input; to help increase awareness of and engagement in cultural diversity and



intercultural issues; and to reach out to ethno-specific communities to disseminate Surrey LIP information and encourage participation in its work.

Ali, a business consultant originally from

Jordan, suggests that the latter networking role will be significant for Roundtable members. “In British Columbia, and especially Metro Vancouver, it’s a very important part of life,” he says.

“There are a lot of things available to an immigrant in Canada,” says Mehta, a native of India who has now experienced the newcomer reality twice. “But often, and I’m an example, we don’t find what we need until it’s too late. So we definitely need outreach. The Roundtable members are a diverse group, and we make a good mix,” he says. “It will be interesting to see the quality of work we can come up with and what the outcomes will be.”

The LIP’s Role

With its mandate to develop a city-wide comprehensive immigrant and refugee integration strategy and action plan by 2016, the Local Immigration Partnership is currently engaged in research aimed at identifying all the services offered, as well as newcomers’ needs. A primary tool for this is the service mapping project, which is slated for completion later this spring. Once identified, services will appear on the LIP website in the form of a searchable map.

The intent is to provide an analysis of gaps and overlaps, and to enable coordinated communication and promotion of the services available while enhancing access for newcomers.

Near term goals include services coordinated at the community level, adapted service and delivery by non-settlement institutions, improved accessibility for newcomers, and enhanced resources from diverse sources. Long term goals revolve around the achievement of significantly better outcomes for newcomers.

Roundtable Members

The 19 Immigrant Advisory Roundtable members come from 17 different source countries.

- Mohammad Ali** > Jordan
- Wafa Al-jabiri** > Iraq
- Tuma Altokhais** > Saudi Arabia
- Khaleda Banu** > Bangladesh
- Nina Dorcas Bazie** > Ivory Coast
- Anthony Cantil** > Phillippines
- Faisal Durrani** > Pakistan
- Luis Guerra** > Mexico
- Clementine Iweh** > Nigeria
- Michael Liang** > China
- Robert Jin-chien Lin** > Taiwan
- Rehab Marghany** > Egypt
- Drastant Mehta** > India
- Magdalena Mot** > Romania
- Yasin Muktar Mussa** > Somalia
- Aysin Nozhat** > Iran
- Ania Placewicz** > Poland
- Monica Haiping Wang** > China
- Dongmei Yang** > China



TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT REFERENDUM—Are you registered?

Beginning in March, all registered voters will receive a mail-in ballot to vote on funding the Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan.

It's important for eligible voters to participate in the mail-in ballot so they can have their say in the future of transportation and transit in Metro Vancouver. You can help by encouraging people in your networks and communities to register or update their contact information with Elections BC.

Be sure to check out www.surrey.ca/VoteYes to learn how the Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan will benefit you and Surrey by cutting congestion, providing better service, and increasing buses and rapid transit.

VOTE YES



Build a new Pattullo Bridge



Maintain and upgrade the region's major roads



Build Light Rail Transit connecting Surrey Centre with Guildford, Newton, and Langley



Increase service on SkyTrain, Canada Line, SeaBus, and West Coast Express



Add more bus service to crowded routes and add new routes in growing areas



Extend the region's cycling and pedestrian networks

LIP UPDATES

Immigration Integration Research Project

Six focus groups were held with over 50 immigrants and Canadian-born residents during the month of February. While the findings from the focus groups are still being collected and analyzed, one theme has emerged quite prominently: a strong sense of civic pride. A final report will be shared in April.

Refugee Settlement Research Project

Led by SFU Surrey, this project launches in March

for one year and has two objectives:

1. Acquire a current view of the needs, barriers and challenges faced by Surrey's refugee population.
2. Identify solutions, actions and promising practices to enhance refugee integration and inclusion.

Service Mapping Project

Led by SPARC BC, this project researches existing assets and gaps in the immigrant services milieu. As of now, over 230 programs and services have been identified. After the verification process is completed,

an interactive inventory/map of services will be made available to the general public on the Surrey LIP website. Watch for it on the soon to be launched www.SurreyLIP.ca

Social Media Campaign

During February, City of Surrey and Surrey LIP partners initiated a social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook. Due to this a Surrey LIP staff member was interviewed about Surrey LIP and focus groups by a local radio station targeting the South Asian population.

Steering Committee Member Organizations

These are the organizations that provide leadership direction to the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership.

- 1 City of Surrey
- 2 The Surrey Board of Trade
- 3 Alexandra Neighbourhood House
- 4 Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC)
- 5 City of Surrey, Human Resources
- 6 City of Surrey Social Planning (Contract Manager)
- 7 City of Surrey, Parks, Recreation & Culture
- 8 Surrey Libraries
- 9 DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society
- 10 Training Group at Douglas College
- 11 Human Resources Management Association (HRMA)
- 12 Fraser Health Authority: Population and Public Health
- 13 Fraser Health Authority: Primary Health Care
- 14 Immigrant Employment Council of BC
- 15 Immigrant Services Society of BC
- 16 Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- 17 Oak Avenue Neighbourhood Hub Society
- 18 Options Community Services Society
- 19 Pacific Community Resources Society
- 20 Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS)
- 21 Semiahmoo House Society
- 22 SFU Surrey
- 23 S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Surrey Delta Service Centre
- 24 Surrey School District #36
- 25 Surrey RCMP
- 26 Sources Community Resources Society
- 27 Surrey Interfaith Council
- 28 Umoja Operation Compassion Society
- 29 Vancity Credit Union
- 30 YMCA

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Let us answer with a word that sums up a lot of what we're about: **Welcome!**

There are many ways to get involved with the Surrey Local Immigration Project, whether as an organization or as an individual. Surrey LIP will host city-wide community consultations and everyone is welcome to join. You can also request to be on our Surrey LIP stakeholder list and receive updates on a regular basis.

Please contact **Olga Shcherbyna**, Surrey LIP Coordinator, for more information. Email: oshcherbyna@surrey.ca Phone: 604-592-7059

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