

THIS ISSUE
Newcomers
and Post-
Secondary
Education

Newcomers
and Surrey
Schools

Transit and
Transportation
Referendum

LIP Steering
Committee
Member
Organizations

LIP Updates

NEXT ISSUE
Perceptions
of Immigrant
Integration in
Surrey

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SURREY LIP NEWSLETTER

Engaged & Inclusive



EDUCATION That Works and Welcomes

Surrey is home to a surprising complement of post-secondary institutions, and they recognize their role in creating an integrated society

Surrey—a college town? That's not the common perception, but consider the facts. Douglas College is based just across the Fraser River in New Westminister, but operates several programs in Surrey. The Surrey Campus of Simon Fraser University enrolls about 6,000 students annually. And Kwantlen Polytechnic University, which has its headquarters >



Kwantlen Polytechnic University campus.

At Kwantlen Polytechnic University 30% of students enrolled at the two Surrey campuses were born outside of Canada

(Education That Works and Welcomes: continued)

➤ in Surrey, enjoys an enrollment of 17,500 across its four campuses, making it one of the province's larger institutes of higher education.

All three institutions are both active within the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership and leaders in the effort to make Surrey a welcoming and inclusive community.

Douglas College, through its Training Group, partners with other groups to offer English language programs, operates the Surrey Learning Centre for immigrants and refugees and participates in several other initiatives.

At Kwantlen Polytechnic University 30% of students enrolled at the two Surrey campuses were born outside of Canada, and that's a key factor in almost everything the university does, says provost and vice-president academic Sal Ferreras. "We see it in our community connections and in the conversations with the school districts that we are in continuous dialogue with."

The most direct implication is on English language learning, Ferreras says. Kwantlen is an open-access university, focusing on teaching more than research and admitting all students who qualify. "It ranges from finishing high school to a high level of training," Ferreras says. The term glass ceiling, while usually applied to women in the workplace, is also applicable to immigrants, he believes. "People retrain to attain."

Accordingly, the language offerings are

diverse. Some students need better language proficiency to succeed at their university studies, while others enroll for the express purpose of improving their English. "Many are here to acquire skills for the workplace or to qualify for further training," Ferreras says.

In the past year Kwantlen has expanded its offerings to include a wide range of professional studies, which range from health science disciplines to a new "contractor's academy," intended to help builders learn business skills. Many of these, as well as other Kwantlen offerings, are with an eye toward newcomers who are embarking on new lines of work or striving to improve their credentials. "I can't think of much that we're not in the business of doing," says Ferreras.

At Simon Fraser University's Surrey campus, initiatives and operations are guided by SFU's newly adopted strategic vision as "the engaged university," says



Simon Fraser University Surrey campus.

Steve Dooley, Executive Director of the Surrey campus. That engagement extends to students, research and, not least, communities. "We want to be Canada's most community-engaged, research-intensive university," he says. "That's why as a university we want to be part of the Local Immigration Partnership."

SFU is very aware of Surrey's multicultural make-up and accelerating appeal to newcomers, and takes it into account in several ways, he says. An India Advisory Committee recognizes the historically strong South Asian population and helps guide active relations with universities in India and co-op programs that allow many students to exchange there. Friends of Simon is a Faculty of Education initiative that recruits, prepares and assigns university students as literacy tutors, particularly with newcomer K-12 students. The Surrey campus has an Interfaith Space that caters to the incredibly diverse student population. "What I see is the richness that this brings to the campus," says Dooley.

A veteran of more than two decades of community-based research, Dooley is especially excited by the Surrey campus's contract to lead the LIP's Refugee Settlement Research Project, which launched this month. Its goals are to acquire a current view of the needs, barriers and challenges faced by Surrey's refugee population, and to identify solutions, actions and promising practices to enhance refugee integration and inclusion.

"The really cool piece of that project is that we're going to be hiring and training refugee youth as research assistants," he says. "So the project will give back by identifying potential leaders who can make a difference in their own communities."



Metro Vancouver Transportation and Transit Referendum Underway

When Faisal Durrani moved to Canada, the commute from his home in Surrey to his first job in Vancouver gave him pause. "I had to change buses with two transfers," says Durrani, a member of the Immigrant Advisory Roundtable. "It ate up a lot of time that I could have been spending with my wife and family. Every day I spent three hours travelling."

Until May 15 registered voters in Metro Vancouver have the opportunity to vote on funding a transportation and transit plan that will improve how people move around the region and save up to 20 to 30 minutes per day on commute time.

"I believe it is very important we vote yes for this," Durrani says. "When new immigrants come to Canada they have a lot of challenges. The commute challenge is on top of that."

A Yes vote for the Mayors' Council Plan in Surrey will mean major road improvements, a new Light Rail Transit line to connect communities, increased and new bus service, a new Pattullo bridge with wider lanes and a centre barrier, and walking and cycling improvements throughout the city.

With almost one-quarter of Surrey residents under the age of 18, a Yes vote also means increased transportation options to university campuses throughout the Lower Mainland as well as over 100 schools in Surrey School District, with transit so frequent that users won't need a schedule.

The plan alone can't solve every problem. Caroline Lai, Manager of English Language Learner Welcome Centre Surrey Schools, notes that, for example, the cost of a bus or Skytrain is already steep for many. "A high number of refugees in our communities can't afford bus tickets to begin with," she says.

But the population of Metro Vancouver is projected to increase by 1.2 million people by 2041. Meanwhile, congestion is worsening

(Metro Vancouver Transportation and Transit Referendum Underway: continued on page 4)

WELL SCHOOLED

More than 40% of students enrolled with the Surrey School Board are English language learners.

A few years ago, Pat Horstead, assistant superintendent of the Surrey School Board, noticed that something unusual was happening: teachers were calling and asking to speak to her directly.

The teachers worked at Guildford-area schools attended by a significant number of children from refugee camps in Iraq, and subsequently Syria. They were concerned that the new arrivals were poorly prepared for school life, with little respect for authority or conception of how to behave, and that their presence was making classroom and playground life difficult for other students.

The school board responded in several ways. Using a form of art therapy, one program revealed that many of the refugee kids were suffering from gradations of post-traumatic stress disorder (as were many of their parents) and provided insights into how to better deal with their issues. A program called CARE channeled refugee children for half their school days into special classes with smaller teacher loads and Arabic-speaking assistants. And the launch of a school-run soccer league provided an outlet for students who didn't have the social capability to join community leagues. Now children

who play in that league are acting as mentors to other refugee children, says Sukh Shergill, manager of the Community-Schools Partnership.

Many other programs exist to make the transition to Canada as easy as possible for school-age newcomers, including a dedicated English Language Learner Welcome Centre. A partial list includes school orientation and registration support; language assessment and placement assistance; ongoing support relating to multiculturalism and settlement; and settlement workers, including those in the Settlement Workers in Schools, or SWIS program.

Horstead emphasizes that, while refugee children do

face unique problems, the roughly 42% of children enrolled with the school board who are English language learners work hard, fit in easily and achieve at a high level. In fact, about 92% graduate compared to about 87% of those for whom English is the first language. "We don't see the proportion of newcomers as a problem at all. These kids add a lot to our schools," she says. "They may need additional services, but overall the diversity they bring is something we celebrate."



A program called CARE channeled refugee children for half their school days into special classes with smaller teacher loads and Arabic-speaking assistants



(Metro Vancouver Transportation and Transit Referendum Underway: continued from page 3)

and the risks of climate change are increasing rapidly. More and better transit and transportation options combined with less congestion —what’s the downside?

Learn more about the Transportation and Transit Referendum and its benefits to Surrey at www.surrey.ca. Eligible voters have until May 15 to register and request a ballot package from Elections BC online at www.elections.bc.ca or by calling 1-800-661-8683. Deadline for mailing ballots is May 29 at 8 p.m.

Surrey Schools and Better Transportation Go Together

- ✔ School District 36 is the largest school district in British Columbia.
- ✔ Founded in 1906, Surrey Schools provides educational programs and services to more than 70,000 students in Surrey, White Rock and the rural area of Barnston Island.
- ✔ There are 101 elementary and 19 secondary schools, spread over a large region.

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

✔ 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

SurreyLIP.ca

In April www.SurreyLIP.ca will launch. The website contains a number of resources, including fact sheets and research & immigrant-related demographic information specific to Surrey. The highlight is our Surrey Online map of over 260 settlement resources and programs, an excellent tool for service providers and immigrants.

Employment and Labour Market Research

Access to employment and utilization of

immigrants’ skills and experience remains one of the most significant barriers to integration. In the coming months (April to August 2015) the Surrey LIP will dig into this issue at a local level, with research that engages business and immigrant communities in pursuit of the following goals:

1. Obtain an understanding of Surrey’s current and looming labour market needs.
2. Acquire a current view of the employment barriers and challenges faced by immigrant and refugee populations.

3. Understand the barriers and challenges faced by Surrey employers in their attempts to recruit, hire and retain new immigrant and refugee workers.

Immigrant Advisory Roundtable

Three members of the Advisory took part in the Newcomer Employment Dialogue at SFU-Surrey on March 24. Magdalena Mot was MC of the event and Drastant Mehta and Clementine Iweh gave inspirational speeches about their volunteering and job search experiences in Canada.

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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