

TORONTO SOUTH LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

NOTES – COUNCIL MEETING

*Monday, February 26 2018, 9am to 1pm
Centre for Social Innovation
720 Bathurst St., First Floor “Garage”*

Agenda:

1. Sector and TSLIP News
2. 2016 Census Data
3. Mental Health Capacity Building
4. Networking and lunch (End of meeting)

IN ATTENDANCE	
ORGANIZATION	REPRESENTATIVE
ACCES Employment	Aimee Holmes
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration	Behi Shafiei
St. Stephen’s Community House	Bill Sinclair
Parkdale Community Information Centre	Cassandra Wong
Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto	Catherine McNeely
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health	Craig Currah
Christie Ossington Neighborhood Centre	Erika Acomata
Toronto South LIP – Newcomer Council	Harold Bisase
Toronto Public Health	Lisa King
Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture	Mbalu Lumor
Toronto Newcomer Office	Muna Gaye
Toronto Public Health	Pam Haines
Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada	Rebecca Nava
Toronto South LIP – Newcomer Council	Richard Villavicencio
CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses	Ruth Lee
Social Planning Toronto	Sean Meagher

Toronto District School Board	Sevgul Topkara-Saru
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and CS	Shankari Balendra
Access Alliance Multicultural Health and CS	Simran Dhunna
Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services	Tim Maxwell
Sojourn House	Tsega Alemagehu
Working Women Community Centre	Vanda Henriques
LIP PROJECT TEAM	
Social Planning Toronto	Angelica de Jesus-Bretschneider
Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture	Giovanni Rico
St. Stephen's Community House	Paulina Wyrzykowski
Woodgreen Community House	Sandra Guerra

Facilitation: Paulina Wyrzykowski, TSLIP Project Director

1.0 Sector and TSLIP News

Ministry of Citizenship Grant for Capacity Building

After a warm welcome to participants, Paulina Wyrzykowski (Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership [TSLIP]) updated everyone on a new capacity building initiative by all five Local Immigration Partnerships [LIPs] and spearheaded by TSLIP. The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration [MCI] granted the five LIPs funding to design and implement a series of train-the-trainer workshops for frontline staff who work with newcomers.

The series will consist of 12 full-day workshops on eight or nine topics. The workshops will be hosted across Toronto, with the goal of reaching 420 frontline staff. Currently, the Toronto LIPs are conducting a needs assessment scan (e.g. a survey and focus group) to refine the training topics. Possible topics include:

- Trauma-informed care
- Long-term family separation and its impact
- Strategies for serving newcomers with low formal education and low language ability
- Gender-based violence and precarious immigration status
- Newcomers with high medical needs
- Vicarious trauma and self-care
- Creating inclusive environments
- Innovative outreach strategies

Tax Clinic Resources and TSLIP Website Evaluation

Each year, TSLIP provides an [online database](#) of tax clinics in the TSLIP catchment area. Sandra Guerra (TSLIP) explained that seven organizations are currently listed on the website. Services are provided at 23 locations. The identified tax clinics are presented according to members' input and therefore does not include *all* income tax clinics across the city. All listed tax clinics are accessible by appointment only. If anyone knows about additional tax clinics, please share the information with Sandra at communications@torontolip.com.

Following Sandra's summary, council members briefly discussed confusion regarding whether Canada Revenue Agency is providing volunteers to organizations (e.g., St. Stephen's House) to also host tax clinics.

Sandra also notified council members that TSLIP's website is undergoing an evaluation process. She is looking for frontline workers who use the website to participate in a survey and focus group to share information on the user experience of the website. Any interested council members are welcome to take part in the evaluation.

Collaboration Award

Giovanni Rico briefed participants on this year's Collaboration Award. TSLIP has nominated the Civic Engagement Curriculum of TSLIP's Social Inclusion Working Group, which consists of six partner agencies who have worked together over the last three years to create the curriculum.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada [IRCC] Contract Negotiations

Paulina explained that IRCC contract negotiations are ongoing, and IRCC funding has been flatlined. In 2014, IRCC provided a 19% budget increase for Syrian refugees and this is expected to be phased into mainstream funding over the next few years. Council members also discussed that a flatline in funding creates problems for organizations given the timing of Ontario's Bill 148, which is reforming various labour laws. For example, part-time staff will have to be paid the same hourly rate as full-time staff.

MCI Grants

MCI is providing funds for new streams. However, additional core funding has not been provided for existing Newcomer Settlement Programs [NSP]. MCI has been telling organizations to use slippage to cover costs resulting from Bill 148, including salary.

Following the brief update on MCI grants, Paulina opened the floor to council members to share updates and insights on any other grants. Meeting participants noted that United Way has announced their program funding stream. However, United Way has

not provided detailed information on whether newcomer funding will change. Projects or programs that received MCI funding include: Refugee Claimant Youth, Mode of Power Connections Program, training Syrian newcomers in trades such as masonry, and wellness programming for newcomer women. It was noted that it would be useful to share a list of which organizations are starting new projects through MCI.

2.0 2016 Census Data

Sean Meagher (Social Planning Toronto [SPT]) presented immigration data from the 2016 Canadian census. He clarified that SPT will continue to review the data behind the current maps and revise and update the layout. Sean showcased maps that highlighted overall population growth in the municipality. Following this, he discussed trends in where immigrants lived throughout the city, language trends, and newcomer distribution. He also referred to David Hulchanski's maps of low-income neighbourhoods across the city to demonstrate that immigrants, including recent immigrants, were primarily dispersed in areas with high concentration of low-income households, including the suburbs, Parkdale and Crescent Town. He also emphasised that the TSLIP catchment area is home to some longstanding legacy migrants, especially in the northwest pocket of the TSLIP boundaries. There are also variations in patterns for employment and education levels amongst immigrants across Toronto and within the TSLIP boundaries, which does not make it simple to cater to such diversities in characteristics and needs.

3.0 Mental Health Capacity Building

Craig Currah (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) presented on insights from the Mental Health Ambassadors Project, which partnered with three agencies to facilitate mental health referrals in the mental health sector. After Craig's experience with the project, he observed five significant trends across the three agencies.

1. Lack of familiarity with culturally diverse supports: Agencies do not know culturally appropriate contacts within the neighbourhood.
2. Organizational barriers: Some people in agencies are not familiar with or do not want to learn about de-escalation skills. Many assume that diverting conflict issues to security is the logical step. However, calling security is not a best practice, especially with regards to mental health and newcomers. Furthermore, security staff are disconnected from mental health trainings. Another important barrier within agencies is that staff do not have supports to build their own resilience and wellness.
3. Stigma: Staff have diverse language around mental health and mental illness. They do not talk about these issues in a sensitive manner.

4. Staffing: Most staff members are educated in Social Work but they do not always have a mental health background. Staff sometimes have personal biases against mental health or may have their own triggers.
5. Time: Staff have heavy caseloads and experience their own stresses and triggers through their work. Frontline workers usually do not have time to work with clients beyond an immediate crisis. They cannot build long term solutions in partnership with their clients. Multiple staff also practice “presentee’ism”, where they feel they must be at work even if they are sick. This is often an indicator of burn out, which increases the risk of mediocre performance. This creates problems for the agency and clients, for instance by increasing worktimes.

Craig acknowledged that mental health training would help address safety concerns. Mental health education is about helping people in an ethical and informed manner. Substance abuse, poverty, literacy issues, and empowerment all link to mental health. Workers therefore need the right tools and education to be ambassadors for mental health, which can help address cross-sectoral issues. Training for the staff also creates a culture of wellness throughout an organization.

After Craig’s talk, council members discussed the importance of changing organizational behaviours. The person who receives mental health training and education must bring it back to the organization. Managers and directors, therefore, need such trainings to be advocates for an overall culture of wellness and mental health. Such trainings should also be included in budgets (e.g., as professional development). Participants acknowledged that while there are structural barriers to the sector-wide impacts of mental health trainings, education on mental health for organizations is still necessary for the time-being; even while we are creating systemic changes.

4.0 Networking and lunch (End of meeting)