

TORONTO SOUTH LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

*Wednesday, January 9, 2019
Centre for Social Innovation - Annex*

In attendance:

Executive Committee Members

Bill Sinclair, St. Stephen's Community House
Debbie Hill-Corrigan, Sojourn House
Mulugeta Abai, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
Diane Dyson, Woodgreen Community Services
Cassandra Wong, Parkdale Community Information Centre
Axelle Janczur, Access Alliance

Project Team

Paulina Wyrzykowski, St. Stephen's Community House (meeting facilitator)
Giovanni Rico, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
Angelica de Jesus-Bretschneider, Social Planning Toronto
Mariam Azimi, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
Nadine Nasir, St. Stephen's Community House (minutes)

Regrets:

Devika Shah, Social Planning Toronto
Lisa Randall, CultureLink

Agenda:

- Welcome & Introductions
- TSLIP Team Report
 - Director's update:
 - Debrief of Inter-LIP funder meeting
 - Update on National LIP Secretariat
 - Newcomer Council Update
- TSLIP Contract and upcoming CFP
- Mental Health Protocols Strategy Discussion
- AOB
- Lunch and Networking

Debrief of Inter-LIP Funder Meeting

The Inter-LIP Funder/Visioning Meeting was held on December 10, 2018. There were 25 LIP representatives (partners and leads), and some foundations and IRCC staff in attendance. The discussion was framed around the "welcoming newcomers" framework, and mostly focused on the receiving community; how do we work with communities to shift the discourse.

Three main recommendations to come out of the meetings were:

- The need for strengthening our social networking and connections outside the settlement and non-profit sectors.
- The need for a coordinated communications strategy around the value of immigration and around Canada's national identity.
- The need for research aimed at collecting and analysing specific data related to newcomer experiences and outcomes.

It was a short meeting, without much time for discussion, so there is room for follow-up. In the future, it would be useful to reach out to non-traditional stakeholders.

LIPs currently need to come up with a strategy to coordinate our messaging and efforts? IRCC has a messaging campaign, and the City of Toronto is working on one, as well as OCASI and United Way.

Some next steps are outlined in the presentation slides, attached.

Axelle indicated that there is already a lot of research, but insufficient knowledge mobilization. There was a suggestion to use the research that already exists. The questions that remain are: how do we communicate the existing research in simple messages? Do our boards know about the infographics that have been created? How do we disseminate the knowledge? How do we do capacity building? A suggestion was made to move past the story of "individual heroes" and focus on the collective impact of the community. York and Ryerson are supposedly working on this.

The United Way and OCASI had a 3 hour session with a marketing firm. They have identified allies that are not in the settlement sector but could also carry the message of welcoming communities. There are key, very public, people who would drive this message. They haven't pulled the campaign together yet, but was a very productive meeting, and there will be another one this year.

How do LIPs fit into this discussion? Paulina suggested that Bill approach the United Way to ask that LIPs be part of crafting this message. Debbie will send Bill the email from the meeting with United Way and OCASI.

Other campaigns that are related to welcoming communities include: Toronto for all, Immigration matters, and the CCR has just sent out an advocacy survey to its members.

There may be follow-up with individual attendees from the United Way and OCASI meeting.

A recent report from Statistics Canada indicates that the unemployment rate for immigrants to Canada is at its lowest level in years. The report can be found here:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2018001-eng.htm>

The question of how we communicate this effectively remains. How do we get this message across, and counter the rhetoric about newcomers "taking our jobs"?

Update on National LIP Secretariat

A working group is working on the National LIP Secretariat initiative. The last meeting was before the P2P Conference. At P2P, Paulina asked: “do you think that a national secretariat would be a good idea? What would its mandate be? What might the challenges be? How would it work?” This was an interesting learning experience, as there was a significant amount of outreach that took place before P2P (emails, outreach, requests for endorsement to 75 out of 77 LIPs), however half of people in the room had never heard of the idea of forming a National Secretariat. Some concerns and uncertainty were vocalized. There was a difference between older and newer LIPs; the more mature LIPs that are more engaged in research and policy generally supported the idea and want more collaboration, while newer LIPs expressed that they feel under-resourced and unsure of how they could take on this extra work.

For some background, out of 77, only 4 have consortium leadership. 67% are community-based, and the rest are municipal. A lot of community LIPs are not based at service providing organizations, but rather other organizations like the United Way.

Some of the concerns that came up, include:

- LIPs don't want the National Secretariat to have an oversight or regulatory role. This was never the intention, but was still a fear;
- Adding extra work or detracting from resources. If we are to proceed, it would need to be through an additional funding application, which was always the intention;
- Duplication of work (for example, Pathways to Prosperity). This has to be thought through, as we don't want to duplicate what's already being done. Note: P2P is funded by SSHRC.

There was also quite a bit of agreement about what the secretariat should do:

- Enhance info sharing between LIPs and between IRCC and LIPs. Basecamp is voluntary, uncoordinated, and not everyone is on it. Nobody has an updated list of all LIPs across Canada. P2P list is out of date. IRCC has a list based on Calgary LIP event, but out of date. No way to communicate with all LIPs.
- Clearing house and hub for LIP related resources (ie. New LIP needs a strategic plan, can see several already existing one);
- Clear voice for LIPs at national tables (ie. National Settlement Council).

The next steps include:

- Sending out a survey to all LIPs, which asks:
 - Do you think a LIP Secretariat would be useful?
 - Do you endorse the Working Group to apply for funding in order to envision what a National Secretariat would look like?
 - Do you support the Working Group to apply for funding for National Secretariat?

Note: The Working Group will request only 1 response per LIP (from someone with decision-making power).

Newcomer Council Update

The City funding for the Newcomer Council ended. Toronto East LIP applied for funding for the Newcomer Council from the Trillium Foundation, but it was not successful. However, TSLIP has a small budget line for the South Newcomer Council to continue. The Toronto East Quadrant LIP is also continuing their Newcomer Council even though they do not have any funding for it. The other LIPs are not continuing with their Newcomer Councils because of the loss of funding.

Giovanni received 10 applications for 7 openings for the Newcomer Council. The goal is to have 12-15 Newcomer Council Members, and currently we have 7. Giovanni and Paulina facilitated a formal interview process.

December was the first meeting of the Newcomer Council. Existing members talked about concrete projects that they want to work on. A concern that was raised is that the TSLIP's Working Group meetings are daytime meetings, and most members cannot attend since they are working or volunteering during the day. During the meeting, the members created a plan of how to be more involved. This includes receiving minutes from each meeting, and then providing feedback to the minutes which Giovanni can add to the minutes before they are disseminated.

Given that the Newcomer Council members are not able to attend meetings in the day, a request was made to hold some Executive meetings in the evening so Newcomer Council members can attend.

The Newcomers Speakers Bureau is still in the development phase because the people working on this have been very busy working on the Civic Engagement Curriculum. We are hoping to launch the Speakers Bureau by end of this fiscal year.

The LIPs have been invited to present at Metropolis about the Newcomer Council. Irmi from the Toronto East Quadrant LIP, Giovanni, and a member of the Newcomer Council will present.

TSLIP is hoping that the Newcomer Council will work with us and our agencies to contribute to our decision-making. Bill would like to use the TSLIP's Newcomer Council to provide guidance to St. Stephen's Community House's (SSCH) work. For example, now the province is doing consultations on the provincial budget and SSCH wants to include newcomer voices. SSCH can utilize the Newcomer Council (and provide an honorarium) instead of pooling together their own group of newcomers for this purpose. Bill indicated that it is important for us to tell our membership that they do not need to create their own Newcomer Councils, as they can use our Councils if they would like newcomers to review their strategic plans, consult on a specific topic, review a brochure, etc. There is significant value added to having a Newcomer Council.

To date, the Newcomer Council has been involved in lot of work with the City, including election outreach, Toronto Newcomer Day, immigrant day, the social justice fair, and a community event to help with winter isolation. They were very involved in working on the Civic Engagement curriculum, and changes were made based on their input. The Newcomer Council has also participated in 3 capacity building opportunities.

The definition of newcomer for the Newcomer Council is not specified, as people can self-identify. However, Giovanni tries to ensure diversity, including a youth member, someone with precarious status, etc.

TSLIP Contract and Upcoming CFP

There is no news about TSLIP contract yet, but the assumption is that everything will remain the same. The original contract includes a reduction in year 3, which is coming up, however the assumption is that IRCC will not hold us to the reduced budget because that's what they did last year.

As of three months ago, TSLIP has a new IRCC officer.

The upcoming call for proposals will be open in February for year the 2020 and possibly to 2025. There was a motion that was seconded that we will apply to continue the LIP in 2020. If no Executive meeting falls within the time period of the Call for Proposals, Bill will send the proposal out to all Executive members.

Bill will talk to all leads about if they are signing on again, what their needs are, etc. This will be included in our work plan and proposal. Leads will have a private conversation. If the non-leads have any questions, please let Bill know.

Bill does not believe that IRCC will make any structural changes to LIPs, but cannot be certain of this. Within the last year, IRCC has been noticing LIPs, paying close attention, and trying to utilize us. For example, the settlement program evaluation came out speaking highly of LIPs, and IRCC spoke highly of LIPs at the CCR International Conference. LIPs are now considered to be a useful partner in the community.

There has been consistent messaging from Gillian Wong about the Call for Proposals coming out in February. OCASI is organizing sessions about how to apply for CFP which means it should be coming out soon.

Mental Health Protocols Strategy Discussion

The TSLIP is receiving extensive calls for professional development related to mental health from front line workers. In fact, mental health is always listed as their top training need. Many trainings have already been done by many organizations, but the need for training is not decreasing. This could be related to the complexity of issues, turnover, etc. However, during the Mental Health Ambassadors Project (which entailed connecting mental health experts with front line workers to assist with referrals), a consultant from CAMH indicated that the state of mental health knowledge in this sector is shockingly low, front line workers lack support, and don't feel like they can come forward when clients have mental health issues because they don't feel like the organization has a structure that can deal with it. In fact, one CAMH representative said that he went in to do training on anxiety, and came out feeling very anxious because front line staff is dealing with so much, don't feel like they can turn to their managers for support, and don't know how to talk about mental health

Currently, when someone is in crisis, most organizations call security or police. There need to be protocols in place to help staff to know the best way to approach situations involving mental illness. When we train front line staff on mental health, we're not speaking to the correct audience. We need to focus on speaking to people that can make the necessary changes. However, it is difficult to get managers involved. The question is: how do we get to the right people? Do we get boards involved? If so, how do we do this?

Angelica updated the Executive on the Systemic Issues Working Group Mental Health Supports event that took place on November 20, 2018. This event highlighted the benefits of funding for community mental health services, and included speakers from the Mennonite New Life Centre, Hong Fook, and OCASI. There were over 50 people in attendance, including funders (IRCC and the City of Toronto), service providers, and community members. Participants showed a great demand for learning opportunities around mental health. The Working Group is working on creating a database on the TSLIP website with existing mental health protocols, and have been able to locate 6 so far. At the event, it was evident that there is a need for basic mental health training. The questions are: who is best positioned to deliver this training? How can it be done in a sustainable way? How will training be implemented if there is no support within agencies for staff to apply training, to take care of themselves, and to know how to deal with clients with mental health issues.

It may be hard to reach Executive Directors and Boards, because they are so busy with other priorities, or maybe because of funding structures that make it very difficult to create frameworks for staff. Many organizations don't even have team meetings or debriefs because don't have time. Therefore, front line staff tend to work in isolation. Another issue that may prevent Boards and EDs from implementing a mental health protocol is the fear of having a protocol used against them, however it is important to remember that the biggest concern is having a crisis occur and not having a protocol in place.

There is some urgency related to this issue, as more newcomers that front line staff are seeing are having mental health challenges. How do we move forward with this?

Cassandra mentioned the challenge of time, as management and boards are so busy. She also mentioned the need for training to be tailored to the specific organization.

Axelle indicated that this sounds like an organizational capacity issue. Bill mentioned that the organizational capacity issue is mostly funder related, as they partially a result of: no professional development lines in the budget, middle management providing clinical supervision, unrealistic case loads, inadequate employee benefits (such as for psychosocial services), and not having private offices to meet clients. It is important to work towards changing funder practices. Mental health may be the issue that will make us all work together to support funder re-education.

Mulugeta indicated that training needs to be ongoing. Also, he indicated that many settlement counsellors are newcomers themselves and don't want to speak about their own mental health challenges due to stigma. We need to encourage staff to speak about this. He hopes that Boards will make necessary changes if there is sound reasoning.

Next steps are:

- **Talking to Council about how to work with funders to help them to realize the importance of changing their funding structure.** There could be three tables to discuss this: 1) for people to be able to debrief and share their challenges, 2) for people to talk about OCASI's orgwise tool (report cards) to see if something similar could be implemented, and 3) to have a structural discussion around what TSLIP can do about this issue.
- Having structural conversations about how we can support staff and keep staff;
- Consider creating a community of practice, in which people come together and support each other (share ideas, talk things thorough, debrief, etc.)
- This may also be something that the Systemic Issues Working Group works on.