



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 21, 2005
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Councillor Raymond Louie and Zool Suleman, Co-Chairs, Mayor's working Group on Immigration in consultation with Director of Social Planning.

SUBJECT: Report from Mayor's Working Group on Immigration

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT to build on and strengthen the City's role regarding immigration issues, Council endorse in principle the six Priority Areas as proposed in this report, as a framework to guide and develop future discussions and initiatives concerning immigration issues at a civic level; the six Priority Areas being:
1. Vision and Values
 2. Policy and Program Development
 3. Economics, Education and Employment
 4. Access to Services
 5. Support to Refugees
 6. Integration, Engagement and Anti-racism
- B. THAT Council recommend to the incoming Council the approval of an extension of the mandate and membership of the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration at their earliest convenience, and ask for a report back with further details on a proposed Framework including potential policy and program directions concerning immigration issues for the City by 2006;
- C. THAT the Mayor on behalf of Council, write to the Federal Ministers responsible for Immigration and Human Resources urging the following:
- 1) that the Federal Government include municipalities in future government discussion and dialogue on immigration and settlement issues;

- 2) that the Federal Government provide increased funding to settlement and language training programs as well as economic development initiatives aimed at new immigrants in BC; and
 - 3) that the Federal Government provide resources to municipalities, including the City of Vancouver, to assist in developing locally-based integration programs and services for newcomers;
- D. THAT the Mayor on behalf of Council, write to the Provincial Ministers responsible for Immigration and Economic Development urging the following:
- 1) that the Provincial Government include municipalities in future discussion and dialogue on immigration and settlement issues; and
 - 2) that the Provincial Government provide increased funding to settlement and language training programs as well as economic development initiatives aimed at new immigrants in BC;
- E. That Mayor and Council forward copies of this report to GVRD municipalities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for their information.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of RECOMMENDATIONS A, C, D and E and presents B for Council's consideration. The City Manager notes that City departments such as Social Planning, City Planning, Equal Employment Opportunity Office, Board of Parks and Recreation as well as the Vancouver Public Library, etc. have been actively involved in supporting and facilitating integration of immigrants and refugees; promoting equal opportunity and participation of newcomers in all aspects of civic life. City staff have participated on a variety of provincial and federal advisory committees on immigration issues. Obtaining official recognition, inclusion of the City's perspectives and viewpoints, as well as funding resources, from senior governments on immigrant settlement and integration will greatly enhance the City's role and relationships with senior governments and the community.

COUNCIL POLICY

In 1986, Council approved the Civic Policy on Multicultural Relations. The policy addresses issues related to the changing demographics of the city, the language and cultural needs of newcomers in accessing civic services, and proposes ways for city staff to respond to those needs.

In 1990, Council approved broad objectives of the City's Communications Program which include finding ways to ensure civic information is accessible to all Vancouverites and that the City should be a helpful and welcoming source of information for all residents.

SUMMARY

Over the past three years, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has become increasingly interested in immigration issues. A recent FCM survey of staff in 10 cities demonstrates a strong consensus among municipalities for more input into programs and

policies relating to immigration. The FCM Big City Mayors Caucus has also formed a working group on immigration, with the purpose of seeking improved co-operation and co-ordination among three levels of government.

In response to these initiatives and to Vancouver's status as the city with the second highest concentration of immigrants in Canada, Mayor Campbell set up a Mayor's Working Group on Immigration (MWGI) in May 2005. The mandate of this group was to recommend key policy and program directions to Mayor and Council regarding immigration issues, to act as a reference group to advise on issues coming out of the Big City Mayors working group and to set a context for Vancouver and its community partners to have a voice in the development of policies and programs related to immigrants and refugees.

This report outlines the background, process and preliminary recommendations of the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration.

The Working Group seeks Council's endorsement of six Priority Areas where the City has concerns or interests related to immigration issues. These six Priority Areas will provide a framework for future policy and program discussion. Some potential actions are noted under each Priority Area.

The Working Group is also seeking Council's approval of recommendations urging specific Federal and Provincial Government actions, and is requesting an extension of its mandate to permit more detailed analysis of issues and potential strategies, and additional community consultations.

BACKGROUND

Vancouver's changing population and civic responses

The City of Vancouver is increasingly a city of immigrants. The 2001 census showed that 46% of Vancouver residents were foreign-born, making Vancouver the city with the second highest concentration of immigrants in Canada. Regionally, over 300,000 immigrants settled in the Lower Mainland, and Vancouver led all BC municipalities in attracting 31% of all new immigrants to the city (52,800) from 1996 to 2001.

During the mid 80's and the 90's, almost two thirds of immigrants came from regions such as South Asia and South-east Asia, including China, Phillipines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, and Korea. The shift in source country has greatly changed the profile of ethnic composition in the city. The newcomers speak a multitude of languages. In the 2001 census, 50.6% of Vancouverites speak a mother tongue other than English.

In response to these demographic changes, the City has undertaken various initiatives and processes to ensure that civic services and programs continue to be responsive to and inclusive of the needs of all Vancouver residents, including newcomers. Over the years, city departments have developed and implemented different programs or services which enhance public participation and access, including immigrant and refugee communities.

Examples of City initiatives include the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Program in the 70's and the Hastings Institute in the 80's to provide training opportunities to

staff on issues such as diversity, literacy, anti-harassment and building inclusive workplaces. The City also supports local social and cultural development initiatives through the provision of civic grants to local non-governmental organizations, many of which deliver services to newcomers. A Newcomer's Guide to the City, available in five languages, was published in 2001.

Overall, the City's role in regard to immigration issues has been to facilitate integration of newcomers into local community, to enhance access to civic services and programs, and to ensure broad engagement and participation of diverse groups, including newcomers, in different civic arenas.

While Federal and Provincial governments are responsible for immigration policy and the funding and delivery of key programs, all three levels of government are actually involved in providing support and services to newcomers. It is therefore important that there is a local perspective in the design and delivery of services to newcomers. Currently, there is no direct role for the City to provide input to other levels of government concerning immigration policy and program.

DISCUSSION

FCM / BCMC Immigration Initiatives

The FCM has been discussing immigration issues among cities since 2002. In 2004, FCM commissioned a report entitled "Scoping Study of Municipal Immigration Issues". The report is based on interviews with staff from 10 Canadian municipalities, including Vancouver. There is a strong consensus amongst participating municipalities that cities need to have a seat at the federal-provincial immigration table, and that there has to be a more co-ordinated approach among 3 levels of government. Cities need to articulate their roles and concerns to senior governments, and request financial support in providing locally-based integration programs for newcomers.

In November 2004, the FCM Big Cities Mayors Caucus (BCMC), comprised of the mayors of Canada's 22 largest cities, created five working groups aimed at improving co-operation and co-ordination among all three levels of government. One of the working groups is dedicated to Immigration. It is chaired by Mayor David Miller from Toronto and includes Mayor Campbell, as well as Mayors from Montreal, Halifax, Saskatoon and Sudbury. The Big Cities Mayors Caucus has started the process of liaising with the Federal Government regarding municipal immigration issues and met with the Federal Immigration Minister earlier this year.

Mayor's Working Group on Immigration (MWGI)

To ensure that the City of Vancouver plays an active role in both federal and provincial immigration policy and program discussion, and in recognition that BC and Vancouver have issues that are unique, Mayor Campbell established the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration in May 2005, with the following mandate:

1. to recommend key policy and program directions to Mayor and Council regarding immigration issues;

2. to act as a reference group to advise on issues coming out of the FCM Big Cities Mayors Caucus Immigration Working Group;
3. to set the context for City of Vancouver and community partners to have a voice in the development of government policies and programs related to immigrants and refugees.

The Working Group is comprised of sixteen members, and co-chaired by Councillor Raymond Louie and Zool Suleman. Membership is based on sectoral representation and expertise in the areas of immigration, ranging from immigrant service organizations, business, academic and research, refugee service groups, and individuals from diverse professional backgrounds (APPENDIX A: Membership list).

The Working Group held four formal meetings between May and September, during which time it agreed on a proposed work plan and timeline to report back to Council, studied background materials provided by staff, and hosted two consultation meetings targeted at service provider groups and at the business community. Working Group members who are representatives from AMSSA (The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC) and the Vancouver Board of Trade, assisted with setting up the meetings. The consultation sessions were well attended and participants provided positive feedback. Staff from the Mayor's Office and Social Planning provided administrative, research and co-ordination support during the process.

The Working Group was asked to report to Council in early Fall. Due to the tight timeframe, the primary task of the Working Group was to identify key policy and program issues and to make preliminary suggestions for possible directions or strategies. The following section outlines key areas of discussion and findings by MWGI.

Priority Areas and Potential Directions Identified by MWGI

In the first two meetings of the Working Group, members identified key issues of concern to immigrants and refugees living in the city. In subsequent meetings, the Working Group discussed potential areas of direction and strategy. Overall, six Priority Areas which relate to municipal interests and concerns were identified, along with some potential directions which the City might pursue in each Priority area. The six Priority Areas are:

1. Vision and Values
2. Policy and Program Development
3. Economics, Education and Employment
4. Access to Services
5. Support to Refugees
6. Integration, Engagement and Anti-racism

1. Vision and Values:

Issues:

The Working Group discussed the need for the City to affirm the values and contributions of newcomers to the city. Vancouver has a unique place in Canada in attracting significant number of immigrants to the City, and this trend will continue in the foreseeable future.

Strategically, the City can position itself to be a role model city in Canada in welcoming and integrating newcomers. Despite challenges that exist, newcomers' successes can be more widely shared and publicized. With the upcoming 2010 Olympics, Vancouver is again welcoming the world to visit, and Vancouver's multicultural image is part of the attraction to international community and visitors.

Potential Direction:

To recognise and affirm the values and benefits of immigration, and to acknowledge the diversity and contributions of immigrants and refugees living in the city. This can be accomplished by developing "value statements" on the role of immigrants and refugees in the city.

2. Policy and Program Development

Issues:

The Working Group recognises that Immigration policy issues may involve all three levels of government and many other stakeholders. Although cities traditionally do not have input in immigration policy issues, the reality is that immigrants and refugees mostly live in cities. In BC, the federal government has devolved settlement service responsibilities to the Province. However, provincial funding does not always address municipal concerns.

The Group discussed the need for creating a multi-level partnership model whereby all three levels of government and community stakeholders can participate in long-term policy discussion and take a co-ordinated approach towards delivering needed settlement and integration programs and services for immigrants and refugees.

Potential Direction:

Explore possible roles for the City in such a multi-level partnership. The City could act as a "facilitator" by bringing stakeholders together to define and put forward issues and concerns. It could also act as an "advocate", helping to ensure that local perspectives are reflected in policy or program discussions. If successful, this work would assist in leveraging programs and funding resources to meet local needs.

3. Economics, Education and Employment

Issues:

Recognising that immigrants bring assets, knowledge and skills, the Working Group identified that economic integration is likely one of the most important aspects for immigrants and refugees successful integration into local community.

Despite labour shortage projections in different areas of BC, there are serious employment challenges for some new immigrants, including those who are professionally-trained. Further, access to advance level language training is limited. Educational advancement opportunities for immigrant youth can be limited. Issues concerning the "Live-In Care Workers" program and 'undocumented' workers were also raised.

Potential Directions:

The City can raise the issue of increased funding for settlement and language training, and economic development initiatives, to the Federal and Provincial Government. Civic bodies

such as the Vancouver Economic Development Commission can also provide advice and support.

Other potential direction includes exploring ways in which the City could work with other levels of government, business, employers, educational institutes, labour and service sectors in developing strategies to address labour integration issues, e.g. mentorship or internship programs for skilled professionals.

The City could also play a 'facilitating' role in raising public awareness of the employment needs and potential contributions of immigrants and refugees to the labour market.

4. Access to Services

Issues:

The Working Group has identified various gaps in immigrant settlement and language services. Most importantly, language training is identified as a high priority for newcomers but it is perceived to be inadequate to address current needs.

Immigrant needs can be wide-ranging. Within civic mandate, key areas to explore may include: support for immigrant youth, women and seniors; access to recreation; emergency services; translation and interpretation; housing; childcare; and small business development.

Potential Directions:

The City can raise the issue of increased funding for settlement and language training programs, to the Federal and Provincial Government. Further consultations with civic departments and other jurisdictions should be considered in the next phase of work.

For the future, the City could raise issues of service gaps and needs to the attention of concerned stakeholders including federal, provincial and civic bodies; build on and enhance existing best practices of programs and services in public and non-governmental sectors; support new civic initiatives which will enhance accessible information and referral for newcomers; and develop civic policy and guidelines for translation and interpretation.

5. Support to Refugees

Issues:

The Working Group discussed the need for the public to understand the full spectrum of refugees who come into Canada, ranging from government assisted, to private sponsorships, to those who seek asylum inside the country. Their issues and needs are unique and different from immigrants. It is also identified that, increasingly, more refugees require special assistance in their settlement. They face issues of mental and physical disability, trauma experiences, illiteracy and life skills adaptation.

Potential Direction:

The City could continue support to refugee service organizations, and bring refugee-related needs and concerns to the attention of the federal and provincial government. The City could explore ways to increase public information/education about refugees e.g. assist communities to develop inventories of 'refugee success stories' which can be publicized through local media.

6. Integration, Engagement and Anti-racism

Issues:

The ethnic profile of immigrants to the city has changed significantly in the past two decades. Many newcomers came to Canada from non-European source countries, and they possess diverse language and cultural backgrounds. As language and cultural integration sometimes take a full generation to happen, newcomers may face varying degrees of acceptance by locals. Sometimes there is a lack of interaction among communities, which creates more segregation. Discrimination and racism still occur. Issues of immigrant youth engagement were also raised.

Potential Direction:

The City, with other levels of governments and community partners, can build on existing anti-racism initiatives such as the March 21st Eliminating Racism event to raise public awareness of issues, and support programs which create opportunities for inter-community dialogue and interaction. Governments and communities could build on effective public engagement strategies in reaching out to immigrant and refugee communities.

Recommendations and Next Steps

In reporting back to Council at this point, the Working Group seeks council's approval of the following recommendations:

Recommendation A: Endorsement of six Priority Areas as Framework to guide future discussions and initiatives concerning immigration issues at a civic level

The Working Group seeks council's comments and endorsement of the six Priority Areas described in this report, as a framework to guide and develop future discussions and initiatives regarding immigration issues at a civic level. The six Priority Areas are:

1. Vision and Values
2. Policy and Program Development
3. Economics, Education and Employment
4. Access to Services
5. Support to Refugees
6. Integration, Engagement and Anti-Racism

In each of the Priority Areas, some potential directions were also included. These were preliminary ideas from the Working Group and they need further analysis and discussions with potential stakeholder groups. Subject to Council's approval of the Priority Issues as a guiding framework and a next phase of work, the Working Group will report back with more details regarding potential directions for policy and program discussion.

Recommendation B: That incoming council will approve an extension of MWGI and ask for a report back

In regard to the Working Group mandate, it is recognised that the Working Group has fulfilled its initial task of identifying key immigration issues and potential directions for the City. However, given the complexity of the issues and the need to involve more stakeholders and community groups, the Working Group proposes that its mandate and membership be extended, which will allow them more time for fuller analysis of the issues as well as vetting

out future strategies and directions. Given that there will be a new Council in December, it is recommended that the incoming Council will approve an extension of the mandate and membership of the Working Group for a next phase of work.

If given an extended mandate, the Working Group will also undertake wider consultations, including with civic departments and other jurisdictions. It will report back to the new Council in 2006 with more details on a proposed framework regarding civic immigration issues, including possible strategies and implications.

Recommendation C: Proposals to Federal Government

Further, the Working Group recommends some immediate proposals to the Federal Government, which can address some urgent needs in the City. They are:

B.1 As the need for including local government perspective is a high priority, and groundwork has been done by FCM and BCMC, it is recommended that the Mayor, on behalf of Council, request that the Federal Government include municipalities in future government dialogue and discussion on immigration and settlement issues;

B.2 Although BC is second only to Ontario in attracting incoming immigrants, it has lagged behind nationally in settlement and language training funding. A BC immigrant may access government funded language training classes up to a lower intermediate English language level which is not adequate for labour market integration. In Manitoba, for instance, immigrants have access to higher level English language classes. Further, employment-related initiatives are essential to the economic integration of new immigrants. It is therefore recommended that the Federal Government provide increased funding to settlement and language training programs and economic development initiatives aimed at new immigrants in BC.

B.3 To assist municipal governments in addressing changing population needs, it is recommended that the Federal Government provide resources to cities to develop locally-based integration programs and services. These could include initiatives such as developing multilingual services and multilingual resource publications targeted at newcomers. Vancouver, for example, has developed a Newcomer's Guide but there is no sustaining fund to support the continuation of the work. These initiatives can be shared or replicated among municipalities to address needs of newcomers at a local level.

Recommendation D: Proposals to Provincial Government

In 1995, the Federal Government announced a settlement renewal initiative to devolve funds and responsibilities for immigrant and refugee settlement to provincial governments. British Columbia and Manitoba are the two provinces which have signed agreements with the federal government. The Province of BC just renewed its Canada-BC Agreement on Immigration this year, and federal transfer payments were \$36.4 million in 2004/5.

The Province of BC spends about half of the funding on settlement and language training programs, and retains the remaining funds within general revenue to be spent on college-based ESL and related programs. Currently, the Ministry of Attorney General and Ministry of Economic Development are the lead ministries with programs and funding for immigrants. It was noted that provincial settlement funding allocation may not always address municipal

needs. For example, Vancouver has lost funding for refugee support services in the recent provincial settlement funding process.

In the area of economic and small business development, which is of interest to many new immigrants, civic bodies such as the Vancouver Economic Development Commission can provide input and support.

It is recommended that the Provincial Government consider including municipalities in future discussion and dialogue on immigration and settlement issues, as well as economic development initiatives. Further, it is recommended that the Province consider providing increased funding support towards settlement and language training programs as well as economic development initiatives aimed at newcomers in local communities.

Recommendation E: Forwarding Report to relevant governments and jurisdictions

This report outlines current issues concerning immigration at a municipal level with proposed recommendations which may be of interest to other GVRD municipalities, and concerned stakeholders such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Feedback and comments from these jurisdictions will contribute to future discussion of the issues.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications for the proposed MWGI next phase of work as existing internal resources will be utilized.

CONCLUSION

Canada is internationally known as the country with an excellent immigration system and welcoming to newcomers of diverse backgrounds. As the second largest city for immigrants in Canada, the City of Vancouver has been rated highly for our quality of life and how the City engages all residents including newcomers. Over the years, the City has developed numerous ways to address issues and needs of immigrants and refugees. But with the increased complexity of issues facing newcomers in the city, and limited resources, new ways of working together, among all levels of government and with the community, must be found to ensure the City, its residents and other stakeholders will continue to benefit from immigration and the diversity of people and cultures that it brings.

The Mayor's Working Group on Immigration has identified a number of significant issues and potential directions which can be the foundational framework in addressing immigration issues at the local level. With continuing support from Council, staff and the community, the City can embark on strategic discussions and dialogue with other levels of governments, stakeholders and the public at large to ensure that Vancouver remains one of the most attractive places that immigrants would call home.

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

MWGI Co-Chairs:

Cllr. Raymond Louie, City of Vancouver
Zool Suleman, Lawyer, Suleman & Co.

Community/Service Sector:

Eyob Naizghi, Executive Director, MOSAIC
Lilian To, CEO, SUCCESS
Patricia Woroch, Executive Director, Immigrant Services Society of BC
Tim Welsh, Program Director, AMSSA

Business Sector:

Dave Park, Assistant Managing Director & Chief Economist, Vancouver Board of Trade
Tom Malone, Regional Vice-President, Scotiabank

Academic/Research Sector:

Daniel Hiebert, Professor, Department of Geography, UBC
Kenny Zhang, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Refugee Service Sector:

Alex Charlton, Executive Director, Storefront Orientation Services
Cecilia Tagle, Mennonite Central Committee

City's Advisory Committee on Diversity Issues:

Olga Scherbyna, Vice-Chair

Members At Large:

Eleanor Guerrero-Campbell, Executive Director, Multicultural Helping House
Prem Gill, Director of Multicultural Programming & Public Affairs, Citytv
Stella Nguyen Davis, Notary Public