



## CITY OF VANCOUVER

# RR-1

### OTHER REPORT

Report Date: November 2, 2007  
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Meeting Date: November 13, 2007

TO: Vancouver City Council  
FROM: Mayor Sam Sullivan  
SUBJECT: Report of Mayor's Task Force on Immigration

#### RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council adopt the recommendations proposed in the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration (MTFI) report dated November 2, 2007, attached as Attachment A.

#### CONSIDERATION

- B. THAT Council approve \$20,000 to support the Summit on Immigrant Employment. Source of funding to be the Contingency Reserve.

#### CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

New Canadians increasingly make up the diverse fabric of Vancouver's population. The recommendations would assist the City of Vancouver to further support, recognize and enable the contributions of this diverse group. The City Manager submits for Council the proposed recommendations and that Council, if supporting the recommendation on the Summit on Immigration Employment, fund the cost of the Summit from the Contingency reserve.

#### COUNCIL POLICY

There is no applicable Council Policy.

## BACKGROUND and DISCUSSION

In November, 2006, City Council re-established the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration and renamed it as the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration. The MTFI has the same mandate as the previous Working Group:

1. To recommend key policy and program directions to Mayor and Council regarding immigration issues at a local level;
2. To act as a reference group to advise on issues coming out of the FCM Big City Mayors' Caucus Immigration Working Group; and
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 MTFI is chaired by Zool Suleman, and membership is based on sectoral representation and expertise in the areas of immigration. (See Attachment A - APPENDIX A). The MTFI held a total of seven formal meetings over the past year. The focus of these meetings was to further develop recommendations based on the six Priority Areas endorsed by Council in 2005. Subcommittees were also struck to assist with developing specific recommendations.

The attached Task Force report provides further details on each recommendation.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendation to support a Summit on Immigrant Employment is estimated to cost \$40,000, of which the City is asked to contribute \$20,000 with the balance to be raised through fund-raising and community contributions. The City's source of funding for this Summit is available through the Contingency Reserve, subject to Council approval.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the proposed directions and actions will ensure that the City of Vancouver continues to be a welcoming city to all newcomers, and that newcomers will have access and opportunities to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of the city. It will also ensure that Vancouver, working with other levels of government and key stakeholders, will continue to play a vital role in the development of best policies and practices related to immigration issues at a local level.

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REPORT OF

THE MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON IMMIGRATION

VANCOUVER

November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007

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## SUMMARY

This is an update report from the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration (MTFI), which was re-established by Council in 2006. Based on the six Priority Areas previously endorsed by Council (September 2005), the Task Force is recommending a number of policy and program directions as well as actions which can be undertaken by the City and concerned stakeholder groups, to address immigration-related issues at a local level.

The Task Force is recommending that:

- Council adopt a "Vision and Value Statement Concerning Immigrants and Refugees";
- The City explore different ways of providing input to other levels of government, and continue to network and engage with other cities, jurisdictions and interested groups on immigration-related issues;
- The Mayor convene a Summit meeting with key business leaders, employer and sectoral groups to discuss the feasibility of launching a multi-sectoral Immigrant Employment initiative;
- The City ensure that the 311 Access Vancouver Municipal Services meets the needs of newcomers to the city, especially in the areas of staff training and service delivery; further, that the City develop Protocol and Guidelines for the provision of translation and interpretation services;
- The City urge Metropolis British Columbia to conduct research on refugee issues, especially in the area of access to affordable housing;
- The City consider sponsoring an annual event commemorating World Refugee Day (June 20);
- The City continue to host the March 21<sup>st</sup> event ( International Day To Eliminate Racial Discrimination), with more involvement from community stakeholders, and include more information on the City's work on anti-racism and diversity initiatives; and
- The City distribute Task Force report to other governments, jurisdictions and concerned stakeholder groups.

On completing this phase of making recommendations, the Task Force views its mandate as being completed. If the recommendations are approved by Council, the City needs to continue providing oversight and support in the implementation of the recommended actions and initiatives.

The implementation of the proposed directions and actions will ensure that the City of Vancouver continues to be a welcoming city to all newcomers, and that newcomers will have access and opportunities to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of the city. It will also ensure that Vancouver, working with other levels of government and key stakeholders, will play a vital role in the development of best policies and practices related to immigration issues at a local level.

## BACKGROUND

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 80's and the 90's, almost two thirds of immigrants came from South and South-east Asia, including China, Phillipines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, and Korea. 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.

Examples of City initiatives include: the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Program to provide training opportunities to staff on diversity-related issues; supporting 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 the 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. 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 2006, City Council re-established the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration (MWGI) and renamed it as the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration (MTFI). The MTFI has the same mandate and membership as the previous Working Group:

1. To recommend key policy and program directions to Mayor and Council regarding immigration issues at a local level;
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 Task Force is chaired by Zool Suleman, and membership is based on sectoral representation and expertise in the areas of immigration. (APPENDIX A: Membership).

## TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

Between May 2006 and July 2007, the Task Force held a total of seven formal meetings. The focus of these meetings was to further develop recommendations based on the six Priority Areas approved by Council in 2005.

The six Priority Areas are:

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

[http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20051004/documents/rr1\\_000.pdf](http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20051004/documents/rr1_000.pdf)

In 2006, the Task Force struck three subcommittees to further develop recommendations and action plans for each Priority Area. The subcommittees are chaired by Dan Hiebert, Tim Welsh and Cecilia Tagle.

During this period, Mayor Sullivan was invited by the Metropolis International Conference to speak on the City's initiatives in addressing immigration issues, including the work of the Mayor's Task Force. The MTFI also met with Federal Labour Minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn during his visit to the City in September 2006.

Other Task Force activities:

- met with senior federal and provincial immigration staff to discuss areas of common concern and interest;
- the Chair was invited to meet with the GVRD Social issues Sub-committee to speak about the work of the Task Force;
- the Chair was invited to meet with the City of Richmond Advisory Committee on Intercultural Relations to speak about the work of the Task Force;
- met with the Vancouver Foundation to discuss potential areas of collaboration;
- met with city staff from the Social Development Plan and Employment Equity Office for input and feedback on current civic initiatives.

In the spring of 2007, the subcommittees presented their proposed recommendations to the Task Force. In total, eight recommendations were endorsed by the Task Force. They are outlined in the following sections

*The Task Force considered each recommendation based on the following:*

- What is the purpose and goal? Does it address one of six approved priority areas?
- What are next steps for implementation?
- What is the timeline? Is it short-term, mid-term or long term?
- What are some expected outcomes?
- What resources are needed?

**RECOMMENDATION #1:**

*The Task Force recommends that the City of Vancouver adopt a "Vision and Value Statement Concerning Immigrants and Refugees", as follows:*

**Preamble:**

While immigration has traditionally been under federal and provincial jurisdiction, most immigrants in Canada live in cities. It is therefore increasingly important that cities play an integral role in advocating for the inclusion of newcomers in Canadian society.

This goal of inclusion is understood to be consistent with our existing commitment to honour and value the role of First Nations as the initial occupants of Canada, and the bilingual nature of Canada, respecting the significance of English and French as official languages.

**VISION AND VALUE STATEMENT CONCERNING IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:**

Vancouver is a city where immigrants and refugees have the best opportunities to become an integral part of the social, economic and cultural fabric of civic life.

**Further:**

The City of Vancouver is proud of its cultural diversity and values the distinctive characteristics of its residents, including newcomers to Canada;

The City of Vancouver is committed to fostering an open, welcoming and safe environment to people of all cultural backgrounds;

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that newcomers contribute to the social, cultural and economic vitality of Canadian society, locally and nationally, and that newcomers contribute to our relationships with other countries and cultures. Accordingly, Vancouver seeks ways to maximize newcomers' contributions to civic life, socially, culturally and economically.

The City of Vancouver will ensure that newcomers have equitable access to all the services provided by the City.

The City of Vancouver will help to ensure that newcomers have access to appropriate and timely settlement and integration services, by working in partnership with other orders of government and non-governmental organizations.

The City of Vancouver acknowledges its role with respect to a large number of visitors to Canada, including tourists, international students, and temporary migrants.

This recommendation falls under Priority Area #1: "Vision and Value", as proposed in the 2005 MWGI report and approved by Council.



A Vision and Value Statement Concerning Newcomers will complement the City's existing vision and policies concerning inclusion, access and diversity, with specific reference to the role the City can play with regard to integrating newcomers.

From the recent 'Vital Signs' reports released by the Vancouver Foundation (2006 & 2007), to the 'Social Sustainability in Vancouver' report by the Canadian Policy Research Networks (2006), it is clear that Vancouver will continue to attract significant numbers of newcomers to the city, and that addressing challenges facing newcomers is of importance to all levels of government and all jurisdictions.

The proposed Vision and Value Statement will provide broad policy support and direction to the City and departments in further developing strategies and programs which will assist newcomers' integration at a local level. By adopting the proposed statements, the City is further positioning itself to be a role model city in Canada in welcoming and integrating newcomers.

#### **What are some expected outcomes?**

A City of Vancouver 'Vision and Value Statement Concerning Immigrants and Refugees' will have long term significance for the City as well as other jurisdictions contemplating a similar approach. More specifically, the Task Force believes that such a statement will:

- a. Enhance Vancouver's status as one of the first Canadian cities to adopt such a Value Statement;
- b. Affirm that Vancouver is a newcomer-friendly city;
- c. Provide a foundational statement which can facilitate future policy and program discussions on welcoming newcomers;
- d. Attract and retain newcomers to the city and ensure that newcomers have opportunities to participate fully in the city's social, cultural and economic life.

#### **What resources are needed?**

There is no resource requirement for this recommendation. Aspects related to access to civic services are more specifically addressed under Recommendation #4.

**RECOMMENDATION #2:**

**2.1 The Task Force recommends that the City continue explore different channels of providing input to other levels of government on immigration-related issues; and**

**2.2 Further, that the City continue to network or engage with various cities, jurisdictions and interested groups with the view of promoting best policies and practices on newcomer integration at a city level.**

These recommendations fall under Priority #2: "Policy and Program Development", as proposed by the MWGI and adopted by Council in 2005.

**2.1 Providing input to other levels of government**

One of the objectives in establishing the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration was to ensure that Vancouver and its community partners have a voice in the development of senior government policy and programs relating to immigrants and refugees.

As noted in the last MWGI report, cities are not frequently partners in senior government policy and program discussion, nor are they necessarily consulted on resource allocation. It is important that cities be invited to participate in discussion concerning service delivery and co-ordination, as well as resource allocation, in order to maximize service impact and to avoid the duplication of efforts.

After the last MWGI report, various exchanges between the City and the other levels of government occurred. Mayor Sullivan and Councillor BC Lee met with Federal Immigration Minister Monte Solberg and discussed the City's interests in this area. At the invitation of Provincial Minister Wally Oppal, the Mayor participated on a Mayors panel at the World Urban Forum speaking to the City's approach in integrating newcomers. Overall, the senior levels of government have become more aware of the City's interest on immigration-related issues and have engaged the City in more discussions related to immigration concerns.

Currently, the City also participates on a Joint Federal-Provincial Advisory Council on Immigration, which advises senior federal and provincial immigration staff on policy-related issues.

In September 2006, the Task Force hosted a meeting with senior federal and provincial immigration staff to explore opportunities for inter-governmental consultation and dialogue. The discussion was helpful in clarifying current policy objectives from all three levels of government. The group agreed to continue with the dialogue in the future.

The Task Force is also aware that the City of Toronto has made significant progress in engaging the two other levels of government. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the City of Toronto, the Federal Government (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) and Ontario Provincial Government (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Ontario) which recognized the respective roles and contributions of the three levels of government with regard to the implementation of a national immigration policy and local settlement and integration policies. Vancouver could also benefit from similar inter-governmental co-operation in the future. The focus could be on establishing a tri-partite, structured, regular consultation process between the Federal, Provincial and City counterparts.

## 2.2 Networking with other cities and stakeholders

The Task Force also recognises the need for the City to continue to network or engage with other cities, jurisdictions and interested groups regarding best policies and practices related to immigration issues. Over the years, immigration policy and practice have been of growing interest among these jurisdictions and sectors. The City of Vancouver has been frequently consulted regarding its policy and practice in the areas of immigration and the integration of newcomers. In recent months, the City was invited to participate in discussions or initiatives related to immigration issues by: the Conference Board of Canada, the Maytree Foundation in Toronto, the Metropolis research group and other cities in Canada, Asia and Europe. As a result, the City is gaining more profile internationally and is able to share learning about newcomer issues with many partners and jurisdictions.

The Task Force therefore proposes that the City continue to engage with diverse partners, both governmental and non-governmental, in discussing issues which have policy and program impact and significance with the view of enhancing the city's approach in welcoming and integrating newcomers.

### Next step and timeline

If Council endorses this recommendation, further strategies will have to be developed to engage the other levels of government. In addition, engagement will be required with community partners on policy and program development, and the sharing of best practices with other jurisdictions and groups. It is recommended that Social Planning Department, together with other interested city departments, continue efforts in this regard, and can report back to council on future opportunities and proposals for engagement with various jurisdictions and partners as these opportunities arise.

### What are some expected outcomes?

The Task Force believes that this recommendation will be highly beneficial to Vancouver and will ensure that the City continues to be a leader in promoting and enhancing the quality of life of all its residents, including newcomers. More specifically, a collaborative partnership approach, with both governmental and non-governmental sectors, will:

1. Support a stronger voice for the City and its community partners in the development of policy and programs relating to immigrants and refugees;
2. Support mutual co-operation and co-ordination among governments and community partners, especially in enhancing best policy and practice related to immigration;
3. Encourage the sharing of learning and exchange of expertise.

### What resources are needed?

Social Planning, together with other interested city departments, can continue efforts in this regard and can report back to council on future opportunities and proposals for engagement with various jurisdictions and partners as these opportunities arise.

### RECOMMENDATION #3:

The Task Force recommends that the Mayor and Council, in partnership with other governments and key partners, convene a Summit meeting on Immigrant Employment Issues in the spring of 2008. The purpose of the Summit is to bring together key employer groups and corporate and business leaders, to discuss the feasibility of creating a Vancouver regional-based, multi-sectoral initiative which can address skilled immigrant employment-related issues.

The Task Force also recommends that the City allocate \$20,000 towards the hosting of the Summit, with the balance of funds raised from other sources including sponsors, foundations and governments. Source of City funding would be from Contingency Fund.

The recommendation falls under Priority Area #3: "Economics, Education and Employment", as proposed by MWGI and adopted by Council in 2005.

The Mayor's Task Force has identified that economic integration is one of the most important factors for newcomers' successful integration into the local community. Issues concerning the under-utilization of internationally-trained skilled immigrants in the labour market, and their access to employment opportunities in the fields of their practice, affect a significant number of newcomers living in the city. The Task Force has also looked at approaches by three cities: Toronto, Ottawa, and Waterloo.

Recent studies and research show that, in the last ten years, income levels of recently arrived immigrants have fallen much lower than that of the local-born population, and that it will now take a much longer time for new immigrants to attain a wage level comparable to their skills and experience. National statistics show that one in four recently arrived skilled professionals are not able to practise in the professions they are trained for.

On the other hand, it is projected that the Province will have a huge number of unfilled jobs over the next 25 years, due to the fact that the number of available jobs will far exceed the total number of local graduates from high schools and universities. Statistics show that by 2017, immigration alone will account for net labour growth in B.C.

The proposed Summit will bring together key leaders from diverse sectors to discuss strategies and actions required to address the noted concerns.

#### The TRIEC approach

Task Force members are especially interested in exploring the *Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council* (TRIEC) approach as it has been very successful in bringing key stakeholder groups together, including employers, business and corporate leaders, service sectors, educational institutions and governments, to seek common solutions on this issue.

The MTFI Chair recently attended a Learning Exchange conference hosted by the Maytree Foundation, the founding group for TRIEC, and obtained useful information on how to proceed with launching a multi-sectoral initiative involving local stakeholders and governments. For example, the City of Toronto had played a significant role in the establishment of TRIEC, including launching a mentorship program within the City.

The Task Force Chair also has had opportunities to raise this issue with the Vancouver Foundation, with the intent of exploring if the Foundation would be interested in playing a convening role similar to the Maytree Foundation which started the TRIEC. The initial response has been positive. Community partners, including immigrant service agencies, the BC Business Council, and the Vancouver Board of Trade, have also indicated support and interest in this endeavor.

Preliminary discussions with Provincial immigration staff were also positive as they indicated there is potential funding available to assist with such an initiative.

### **What are next steps and what is the timeline?**

If the Mayor and Council support this recommendation, the next step will be for the Mayor to approach key partners to form a Summit Event Organizing Group which will be mandated to organize the event. The Summit Event Organizing Group will be responsible for:

- Working with Mayor and Council, and other stakeholders, to identify key invitees to the Summit, including key employer groups, corporate and business leaders, and government stakeholders. Based on the TRIEC experience, an initial Summit may target up to 100 key community leaders, institutions and stakeholder groups to participate;
- Provide oversight on event planning and logistics;
- Funding - it is recommended that Council consider providing \$20,000 in funding towards hosting the event with the balance raised from other sources including sponsors, foundations and governments. The Summit Event Organizing Group will assist in raising sufficient funds for the event;
- Report back to Council and other stakeholders on the Summit and its outcomes.

The Summit event is anticipated to require about three months of planning. Planning can start upon Council's approval of the recommendation. It is anticipated that the event can take place in the spring of 2008.

### **What are some expected outcomes?**

The Task Force anticipates that the Summit event will accomplish the following:

- Key stakeholders concerned about employment-related issues for skilled internationally trained immigrants will be brought together to discuss the feasibility of forming a Vancouver-regional-based, multi-sectoral Leadership Council to address issues;
- The issues of access to the labour market by skilled immigrants will gain greater public profile and understanding, resulting in more effective labour integration strategies for newcomers to Vancouver;
- The direction in addressing skilled immigrant employment issue will be identified and agreed upon by Summit participants, thereby creating a blueprint for future action;

- City of Vancouver will be recognized as a leader in advocating for positive change in eliminating employment barriers for newcomers;
- Better quality of life and economic stability for newcomers and families;
- New relationships among stakeholders to address issues collectively;
- Newcomers can contribute towards the local economy.

#### **What resources are needed?**

It is recommended that the City provide up to \$20,000 to support the hosting of the Summit event, with the balance of funds raised from other sources including sponsorships, foundations and governments. Source of City funding would be from Contingency Fund.

## RECOMMENDATION #4

The Task Force recommends that the City continue to provide multilingual services to newcomers and others who require the services and consider the following:

- 4.1 That the 311 Access Vancouver Municipal Services have the capacity to provide appropriate information and referrals to newcomers; that staff training and service delivery of 311 Services be sensitive to the multilingual needs of newcomers to the city; and
- 4.2 That the City continue efforts to develop protocol and guidelines on translation and interpretation which will support residents with second language needs.

This recommendation falls under Priority Area #4, "Access to Services", as proposed by MWGI and adopted by Council in 2005.

4.1 City Council recently approved a consolidated service model accessible by dialling "311". According to the staff report, "the vision for this model, called 311 Access Vancouver, is to offer Vancouver citizens single-point-of-access to most City information and services. A 24/7 call centre would be designed to allow efficiency, quality, and consistency in responding to the 1.4 million citizen requests received by phone annually. Emails that flow through the City's general inquiry mailboxes would also be processed by 311 staff."

Further, the Centre would be staffed by up to 54 highly trained City employees. These staff would respond to questions and service requests for a wide variety of city matters.

The 311 Centre is slated to open in mid 2009, and will answer general inquiries for all City departments and boards. Between 2009 and 2011, complaints, service requests and billing/payment requests will transition from departments to the 311 Contact Centre.

According to staff report, to better serve our diverse population, the 311 call centre would employ staff fluent in Vancouver's predominant languages. The centre would also have available through a third-party service over-the-phone interpretation services in over 150 languages.

The Task Force supports the proposed strategy to serve the diverse population of Vancouver. Further, it wants to emphasize that staff responding to calls from residents who are immigrants or newcomers to the city, may require specific training and knowledge regarding issues of access, familiarity with government systems, and language capacity to access other staff and/or sources of information. A re-directed call to other staff or sources may not be feasible in some instances if the callers are without the necessary language skills.

Currently, the City is providing a multilingual phone service in 4 languages. In preparing for 311 multilingual services, it may be useful to collect data and information from the current service providers as to frequently asked questions and ways of referral to other sources, including those outside of the city's jurisdiction.

Another suggestion is that during 311 training, the City can approach service organizations which have the expertise in serving newcomers for their input and advice.

There is no additional resource requirement to this recommendation if adopted by Council. 311 project management staff can further consult with appropriate groups which can assist in issue discussion or provide additional information.

4.2 The Task Force also recommends that the City continue to develop and consolidate its current approach in providing translation and interpretation to diverse residents of the city.

According to the 2001 census, Vancouver residents speak a multitude of languages, with 50.6% of the population speaking a mother tongue other than English. As noted above, the City is already providing a multilingual phone-in service in four languages. There is an inventory of staff with second languages who can assist different public if needed. Civic departments have provided different language support or services, including: multilingual collection in public libraries, the translation of important documents and notices, the hiring of staff with second language skills to undertake city outreach initiatives, and the provision of interpretation services at public meetings or hearings if required.

All of the above approaches are important strategies for the City and contribute towards greater public engagement and participation, especially from residents who have language barriers. However, a more coordinated approach with overall protocol and guidelines for translation and interpretation will be necessary as the scope of services increases and staff may require different supports to determine the appropriateness and levels of services needed.

The Task Force is therefore recommending that the City continue to develop and consolidate its current approach to providing translation and interpretation to diverse residents of the city, many of whom are immigrants and refugees, and establish a formal Translation and Interpretation Protocol and Guidelines for use by the City.

#### **Next step, timeline and costs**

This recommendation, if adopted, will be referred to appropriate city departments for further implementation. It is recommended that development of the Translation and Interpretation Protocol and Guidelines be undertaken and implemented in the period prior to the launch of 311. Costs for implementing the Protocol and Guidelines can be included in the staff report to council.

#### **What are some expected outcomes?**

A City of Vancouver Translation and Interpretation Protocol and Guidelines will ensure Vancouver residents have equal access to important civic services and information, provide clear direction to staff on the provision of language services, and will provide a useful template to other jurisdictions and groups which are interested in developing multilingual services.



## RECOMMENDATION #5

That the City recommend to Metropolis BC that research be conducted on issues concerning refugee access to affordable housing; part of the research can be focused on the feasibility of 'temporary suites' for newly-arrived refugees, including claimants, during the initial period when they often lack resources or employment. Research findings can be shared with municipal and other levels of government for future planning deliberations.

This recommendation falls under Priority area #5, "Support to Refugees", as proposed in the MWGI report and approved by Council in 2005.

Affordable housing, access to services in a central location and need for language interpretation are the main issues for refugees. Societal stigma and a lack of understanding about refugees also impede their acceptance by and integration into the local community.

In Vancouver, housing is increasingly unaffordable. There is also the concern about the type and size of housing available to refugees and their families. In some cases, refugee housing needs cannot be addressed by temporary shelters, emergency or social housing. For refugee claimants, they often have few choices for housing and end up staying in the cheapest accommodation available including in the Downtown East Side (DTES).

Based on MTFI and staff consultation with the Vancouver Refugee Council, housing needs for refugees is identified as the top concern. More research in this area can help policy makers, housing advocates, and community groups understand the challenges faced by this very vulnerable population, and may result in positive changes in housing access for refugees.

### What are next steps?

Metropolis BC (formerly RIIM) is a key group responsible for research on immigrant and refugees issues in BC. The Co-Director of Metropolis BC is a member of the Mayor's Task Force. If Council adopts this recommendation, the City can write to Metropolis BC requesting that they consider "Housing choices for refugees" as a potential area of research.

### What are some expected outcomes?

1. Based on research recommendations, refugees may have increased access to proper housing; and
2. Broader understanding of the housing needs of refugees by various sectors.

### What resources are needed?

No additional resources are required for this recommendation.

## **RECOMMENDATION #6**

The Task Force recommends that Council consider including the World Refugee Day as an annual International Event hosted by the City. The event can help raise awareness of the issues concerning refugees.

The recommendation falls under Priority Area # 5, "Support to Refugees", as proposed by MWGI and adopted by Council in 2005.

This proposal relates to how the public generally perceive 'refugees'. Media reports on refugees can be negative and may not adequately convey the hardships faced by refugees or the resilience they possess. They do not necessarily place refugees within a larger human rights framework. More than half of refugee claimants eventually become permanent residents. Through public event such as World Refugee Day, the public will become more aware of the issues and challenges facing refugees.

Council has requested that criteria be developed for evaluating potential National and International events. City staff will be bringing forward these criteria for Council's consideration in late November, 2007. Once the criteria are approved, Council can determine whether the World Refugee Day would meet the criteria for such an event.

The Task Force believes that a World Refugee Day event would meet the City's guidelines and eligibility criteria. A City-sponsored World Refugee day can be planned in partnership with groups such as the Canadian Red Cross, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and other interested groups. In 2007, the Mayor had issued a proclamation at a World Refugee Day event co-sponsored by the Vancouver Public Library, the Canadian Red Cross and the Vancouver Refugee Council.

### **Costs and timeline**

The average cost of a city-sponsored international event is \$2,000 per annum. The World Refugee Day falls on June 20<sup>th</sup>. If Council adopts this recommendation, the World Refugee Day will be evaluated against the proposed criteria by staff and brought forward for Council's final consideration in January 2008.

### **What are some expected outcomes?**

The outcome of hosting an annual event to commemorate World Refugee Day will be to reduce societal misconceptions or stigma regarding refugees.

## RECOMMENDATION # 7

The Task Force recommends that the City continue and expand civic initiatives on integration, engagement and anti-racism including expanding and broadening the March 21<sup>st</sup> International Day To Eliminate Racial Discrimination, and to more widely publicize the City's work and accomplishments related to diversity, integration, engagement and anti-racism.

The recommendation falls under Priority Area #6, "Integration, Engagement and Anti-racism", as proposed by the MWGI and adopted by Council in 2005.

MTFI members acknowledge that the City has provided leadership to and done extensive work on diversity-related initiatives, including working with a wide range of community groups, on employment equity issues, and through the Hastings Institute.

The proposal is to further broaden the participation and involvement of the community in specific civic initiatives such as the March 21<sup>st</sup> International day To Eliminate Racial Discrimination, which the City has hosted annually for over a decade.

There are four specific suggestions for inclusion in future March 21<sup>st</sup> events:

1. To broaden the scope of community involvement in the planning and organizing of the event. Explore venues for hosting the event, including venues outside City Hall.
2. One key component of the event will be to report out on diversity and anti-racism work undertaken by the City (and community) over the year.
3. The content of the report will be shared widely with media and the public.
4. Summary of the city's work on diversity, integration, engagement and anti-racism can be included in the City's various reports, newsletters and other communications materials. The intent is to promote awareness of issues and engage public involvement. The intent is to also show the City's commitment to a structured process of improvement and communication.

### What are next steps?

The City has been hosting the March 21<sup>st</sup> International Day To Eliminate Racial Discrimination event for the past ten years.

In 2006 and 2007, staff had provided reports to Council on departmental work related to diversity and anti-racism at the March 21<sup>st</sup> event. If Council adopts this recommendation, the event planning staff group can consider incorporating some of the proposed activities in 2008. Further, the corporate communications group will be informed to consider incorporating highlights of the city's diversity and anti-racism work in various civic communications materials and channels.

### What are some expected outcomes?

1. The City's work on diversity, integration, engagement and anti-racism will be more widely known in Vancouver and beyond;
2. The City's initiatives can be shared widely with other jurisdictions;
3. Community involvement and participation will increase the profile and reach of civic events;

4. The message of Vancouver as a leader in diversity, integration, engaging the community and anti-racism will make the City more attractive to prospective residents and newcomers.

**What resources are needed?**

The City currently hosts the March 21<sup>st</sup> International Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination event annually, with a budget of \$2,000. It is not anticipated that additional resources would be required.

## ***NEXT STEPS***

The Mayor's Task Force was re-established by Mayor Sullivan and Council in 2006. In developing its recommendations over the past twelve months, it has consulted or sought advice from many sources, including city councilors and staff, other levels of government and their representatives, as well as community partners including the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Metropolis Project, major immigrant service organizations, and other stakeholder groups which are interested in immigration related issues.

In the course of developing its recommendations, the Task Force has received much-needed support from the Mayor and his staff, the support of City staff including Social Planning and EEO. Due to the relatively short timeframe, the Task Force has not been able to consult more broadly with diverse groups in the community, including other civic groups and advisory bodies. It is hoped that the Task Force report, once adopted by Council, can be more widely shared with interested parties and stakeholders for their information.

### **RECOMMENDATION #8**

**That Mayor and Council forward copies of this report to Federal and Provincial government and Ministers responsible for immigration, Metro Vancouver municipalities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, and relevant civic and community groups, for their information.**

On completing this phase of making recommendations, the Task Force views its mandate as being completed, and believes that the next phase of work has just begun. The Task Force hopes that the recommendations will provide a useful framework to City government in continuing their work in the area of immigration issues at a local level. The next phase of work will require a different focus and level of resources. If the recommendations are approved by Council, the City needs to continue providing oversight and support in the implementation of the recommended actions and initiatives. During the implementation phase, the current members would welcome opportunities to provide further input or advice to staff. Consultation meetings can be convened by staff for that purpose when the need arises.

## *CONCLUSION*

The role of cities in addressing immigration-related issues has changed over the years. Over 80% of Canadians now live in cities, and most immigrants settle in urban cities.

A study from the Migration Policy Institute, addressing the role of Cities in Immigration Integration, notes that:

"As cities across the world become ever more the focal points of post-industrial economic growth and immigrant settlement, city governments, agencies, social groups, and organizations of civil society are playing ever more influential roles in shaping social inclusion and integration pathways. In part, this means that cities will take on new policies and programs, and some may assume responsibilities that traditionally have been associated with more senior-level governments in order to respond to the needs, challenges, and opportunities posed by new residents, institutions and economic activities." (Brian Ray, "The Role of Cities in Immigrant Integration", Migration Policy Institute, October, 2003)

The implementation of the proposed directions and actions will ensure that the City of Vancouver continues to be a welcoming city to all newcomers, and that newcomers will have access and opportunities to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of the city. It will also ensure that Vancouver, working with other levels of government and key stakeholders, will continue play a vital role in the development of best policies and practices related to immigration issues at a local level.

With concerted efforts by everyone, Vancouver will continue to be one of the most livable cities in the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Appendix A

### Mayor's Task Force on Immigration (MTFI) - Membership

Mayor Sam Sullivan

*MTFI Chair:*

Zool Suleman, Lawyer

*Liaison Councillor:*

B.C. Lee, City Councillor

*Academic/Foundation:*

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

*Business:*

Dave Park, Vancouver Board of Trade

*City's Advisory Committee on Diversity Issues:*

Olga Scherbyna

*City Council*

Raymond Louie, City Councillor

*Immigrant Services:*

Eleanor Guerrero-Campbell, Multicultural Helping House  
Tung Chan, SUCCESS  
Eyob Naizghi, MOSAIC  
Tim Welsh, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC  
Patricia Woroch, Immigrant Services Society of BC

*Refugee Services:*

Alexandra Charlton, SOS (Settlement Orientation Services)  
Cecilia Tagle, Mennonite Central Committee

*Staff Liaison/Support:*

Baldwin Wong, Social Planning