



## ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: January 1, 2013  
Contact: Mary Clare Zak  
Contact No.: 604.871.6643  
RTS No.: 9884  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: January 15, 2013

TO: Vancouver City Council  
FROM: General Manager, Community Services  
SUBJECT: Application for Provincial Grant to support 'Welcoming Communities : a Healthy and Connected City' initiative

### *RECOMMENDATION*

THAT Council authorize the General Manager of Community Services to enter into a contractual agreement with the Provincial Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Development to undertake a Welcoming Communities initiative between January 2013 and March 2014, with terms and conditions acceptable to the General Manager of Community Services and the Director of Legal Services.

### *REPORT SUMMARY*

This report seeks Council's approval for Social Policy to obtain a grant from the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Development to undertake a citywide initiative entitled " Welcoming Communities: a Healthy and Connected City". This 15-month initiative will strengthen newcomer's integration through developing innovative programs and promoting collaboration amongst social services, businesses, educational and research institutions, and neighbourhood-based organizations.

This initiative will support Council's priority on building Strong, Safe and Inclusive Communities especially in regard to enhancing civic engagement and addressing immigration-related issues.

### *COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS*

There is no applicable Council Authority or previous decisions relevant to this report.

## *CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS*

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing Recommendation.

## *REPORT*

### *Background/Context*

In 2009, the City was the successful proponent of a demonstration project called the Vancouver Dialogues Project which aims to build stronger relations between Aboriginal and newcomer communities. Funded by the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, the Dialogues Project involved partnership between the City and numerous organizations and communities, and has proven to be a ground-breaking initiative engaging Aboriginal and immigrant communities.

In August 2012, the Provincial Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, through its Immigrant Integration Branch ( which funded the Dialogues Project), issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking proponents for a new initiative called 'Welcoming Communities Program' (WCP). The RFP was open to community organizations as well as local governments. Successful proponents will implement a Welcoming Communities Action Plan which aims to increase the capacity of the community to support the integration of new immigrants.

In September 2012, Social Policy staff met with a number of community organizations to discuss the RFP and the scope of a Vancouver-based proposal. It was agreed that Social Policy, on behalf of City of Vancouver, would take on the role of a Sponsoring Organization, co-ordinate community partnership as well as apply for the program funding. With input gathered from project partners, Social Policy submitted a proposal to the Ministry in early October. On November 13, the Province announced that the City of Vancouver was a successful proponent for the Welcoming Communities Program.

### *Strategic Analysis*

Canada is undergoing significant demographic changes within its immigrant populations, and Vancouver is experiencing these changes more than most municipalities. In the 5-year period covered by the last census (2001-2006), 43,470 immigrants were recorded as arriving in the City of Vancouver. This amounts to 26% of arrivals to the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area. Immigrants now make up a very large portion of the city's population, with the 2006 Census recording 46% of Vancouver residents as foreign-born, and 50% of them arriving in the past fifteen years.

In recognition of this growing diversity, the City has developed policies and initiatives which address and respond to the opportunities and challenges that this diversity brings. Recent initiatives undertaken by the Mayor's Working Group on Immigration, the Vancouver Dialogues Project, the City Newcomer's Mentorship Program and the

Healthy City Strategy, are strategic efforts by the City and community partners to engage with diverse residents and newcomers.

The City and project partners believe that the WCP will provide an excellent opportunity for all interested partners to reflect on the unique needs and perspectives of Vancouver's newcomers and to develop innovative and effective strategies in creating a welcoming and accessible city for all.

The Welcoming Communities proposal identified five key Issue Areas and proposed various strategies to address the gaps/challenges. Currently, project partners have formed Working Groups to identify specific initiatives for each Issue Area, to be finalized in January 2013. Below are highlights from each Issue Area and some preliminary strategies:

1. Establish a Vancouver Collaboration and Planning Table on Immigration Issues

While Vancouver has long established organizations and groups serving and working with newcomers and immigrants, there is not an overall Collaboration and Planning Table which brings key players, sectors and organizations together. This lack of coordination may result in service gaps or reduce opportunities for collaboration and innovation and sharing of best practices. A new Collaboration and Planning Table to guide this project and beyond will be a significant legacy for the future. The Working Group will be proposing terms of reference for this Collaboration and Planning Table.

2. Increase sense of belonging and connectedness among newcomers

The issue of social connectedness and belonging gained much public attention with the release of the Vancouver Foundation report on Connections and Engagement. The proposal will seek ways to strengthen social relations among residents and promote leadership. A proposed citywide summit/symposium will engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including policy-makers from Provincial and Federal governments, as well as Metro Vancouver municipalities. Some current or upcoming issues such as provision of settlement funding in B.C., legislative and regulatory changes, status of non-permanent residents including temporary foreign workers and international students, can be explored through this dialogue.

3. Ensure welcoming and inclusive workplaces and practices

The issues of under-employment or lack of employment for newcomers and how they are welcomed in the workplace are of interest to the project partners. Workplaces which are welcoming to all including to non-permanent residents such as temporary foreign workers or foreign students, and those which have best practices in hiring and retention, will be invited to share their perspectives. Partnering with the Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. and other key stakeholders in Business and Human Resource will be an important strategy.

#### 4. Improve access to civic services and enhance civic engagement

Newcomers often find it challenging to access service information they need or find ways to obtain those services. Access and information are the starting points for strong civic engagement for new residents. A revamped Newcomer's Guide to the City can be more customized to the needs of newcomers and can be framed with key messages on civic engagement and participation. New formats for the guide may include a more interactive and illustrative approach and using new technologies such as ebook or apps to appeal to a wider audience.

#### 5. Continue intercultural and inter-community engagement between Aboriginal and immigrant communities

The Welcoming Communities Project will further engage with Aboriginal and immigrant communities by adapting a Newcomer's Guide to Aboriginal Communities (created by the Dialogues Project) for provincial newcomers' language courses. Information about Aboriginal communities can be added to the proposed City Newcomers Guide. Further, local initiatives such as a story-gathering project or youth-related program engaging with Aboriginal and newcomer youth will also be considered.

#### Project Steering Committee

To date, a number of representatives from twenty five organizations such as neighbourhood houses, immigrant service organizations, Aboriginal groups, community and social services organizations, have agreed to be on the Project Steering Committee. (Please see Appendix A for a list of participating organizations.)

These partners were involved in the planning process and will continue to contribute ideas/actions to the project. A final Welcoming Communities Action Plan will be presented to the Ministry on or before February 15, 2013, which will outline the work program through to March 2014.

Other project partners in Business, Labour, Human Resource sectors, and City staff from other Departments, will also be consulted or invited to join the initiative.

### *Financial*

The Welcoming Communities Program will provide a maximum of \$567,000 to this initiative, pending Ministry's agreement to the final Action Plan and the signing of the contract. This funding will cover the costs of the entire initiative, including project management, consultancy, evaluation and initiatives under each issue area, over a 15-month period (January 2013- March 2014). In kind support will be provided by project partners where appropriate. Social Policy will provide in kind staff time to oversee the project which is included in the Social Policy Operation Budget and there is no financial impact to the City.

In the event that the Province cannot provide the requested level of funding towards this initiative, the City will not be able to proceed with the proposed initiative.

*Legal*

Legal Services will review and approve the terms of the contract.

*Conclusion*

Vancouver continues to be one of the key destination cities for immigrants arriving in British Columbia and Canada. The Welcoming Communities initiative will offer a broad range of innovative programs to newcomers which will enhance their integration pathways. The proposed Collaboration and Planning Table on Immigration Issues will build stronger capacity among diverse sectors to better understand and respond to the needs, talents and challenges of newcomers. With concerted efforts by all, Vancouver will truly be one of the most welcoming cities in Canada for all newcomers.

\* \* \* \* \*

List of Welcoming Communities Project Steering Committee (as of December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013)

- Association of Neighbourhood House
- Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House
- DTES Neighbourhood House
- ELSA Net
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
- Gordon Neighbourhood House
- Immigrant Employment Council of B.C.
- Immigrant Services Society of B.C.
- Kitsilano Neighbourhood House
- Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
- Little Mountain Neighbourhood House
- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
- MOSAIC
- Musqueam representative (requires formal invitation to Musqueam)
- Native Education College
- Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society
- South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
- Social Planning and Research Council of B.C.
- S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- YMCA of Greater Vancouver
- Women Enterprise Centre
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Society
- Vancouver Community College