

London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership Inclusion & Civic Engagement Sub-council Wednesday, March 24, 2010

Present: Salah Alathemna, Rose Aquino, Robin Armistead, Oscar Enriquez, Jason Hastings, Anna Hendrix, Valy Marochko, Susan McElroy, Brenda Qureshi, Dharshi Lacey, Estela Quintero-Weldon, Nassisse Solomon, Arlene Thompson, Maria Vaques, Janice Walter, Nina Hamou;

Regrets: Lourdes Assis, Suzanne Huot, Jo-ann Hutchinson, Janette Butler, Dieufort Bellot, German Gutierrez.

SUMMARY

Welcome & Introductions

Estela introduced herself as the co-chair, in German's absence she will chair the meetings. Susan McElroy and Brenda Qureshi introduced themselves as new participants.

Minutes and Attachments

After review, minutes were collectively endorsed by the sub-council. Attachments circulated have been compiled in one document and circulated amongst the Sub-council.

Updates

Estela highlighted that there are two meetings remaining to draft a strategy for the Inclusion and Civic Engagement Sub-council. Our goal is to submit a strategic plan to the Central Council by April 23.

Review Definition

The definition of Inclusion & Civic Engagement was reviewed.

Valy had communicated to the group that the following be included: "In an inclusive community, people are valued because of, not in spite of, their differences. Inclusiveness creates a climate where diversity is truly valued. Each person is respected for their differences not just tolerated. Each person is recognized and developed, and their talents are routinely tapped into (e.g., participation in economic and decision making structures)."

Review of Gaps

Nina presented to the group the summarized priorities compiled in consultation with the Chair, based on last meeting discussion and input from the Community Action Planning Day.

Main points included:

- Lack of awareness amongst host community in engaging immigrants
- Shared Space (see united way report)

- Engaging Youth
- Barriers to Accessing Services

At the last meeting it seemed that group focused on identifying strategies rather than priorities. Nina explained that the following points identified at the March 1, 2010 meeting are strategies:

- Creating asset-based bridging tools to bring together the host community and the newcomer communities
- Define ways of engaging the host community in the initiative of inclusion

We need to take some steps back and identify the key priorities that we want to target.

The group began to address the following priorities:

1. Limited knowledge amongst host community in engaging immigrants

- Lack of Information/ promotion
- Stereotyping, racism, apathy
- lack of coordination of civic and social engagement opportunities

STRATEGY: Create a multilayered community based Communication Strategy

STRATEGY: Involve businesses and corporations as sponsors of events geared to engaging immigrants

STRATEGY: Increased involvement of schools

STRATEGY: Cultural diversity training educate across different sectors

STRATEGY: Creating a toolkit to support organizations in engaging immigrants (or adopting and tailoring an existing one to the London Community)

Potential outcomes:

- Increased involvement/ engagement of host community

2. Barriers to engagement at various levels of society

Understanding that engaging is a two-way process, the group decided to consider focusing on barriers from the immigrants' side also. This has been included as a separate point so that it does not get lost.

- Volunteering:
 - Concept of volunteering
 - One of the documents earlier identified by the group called, A New Canadians First Decade of Volunteering (Pillar non-Profit), will be useful for identifying some of the gaps and strategies
- Decision making at neighbourhood level
 - Collaborating with new neighbourhood strategy
 - Need increased involvement of Schools

- c. Decision making on municipal level
- Lack of knowledge of right to vote and the voting system, on candidates and their platforms, lack of transportation to voting stations. (Canadian Citizens only)

Potential outcomes:

- Increased involvement/ meaningful engagement of immigrant community in decision-making processes
- Increased diversity/representation on planning and decision-making bodies (community-based, neighbourhood-based, advisory committees, task forces, coalitions and boards of directors, as well as in the employment sectors
- Increased voter turnout during municipal (and other levels) of Canadian elections

Strategies will be explored at the next meeting.

Next Steps

Group has requested to break into smaller working groups next meeting to target other priorities: engaging youth, shared space and barriers to accessing services.

ACTION: Nina will organize priorities and update template with information discussed in this meeting and include strategies found in local studies done by Pillar non-Profit, United Way of London & Middlesex and Childreach.

Next Meeting:

April 8, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Kinsmen Recreation Centre, room 2a

Regards to nhamou@uwlondon.on.ca