



County of Simcoe
Social Services
Children & Community
Services Department
1110 Highway 26,
Midhurst, Ontario L0L 1X0

Main Line (705) 722-3132
Toll Free 1-866-893-9300
Fax (705) 725-9539
simcoe.ca



MINUTES

MEETING DATE: January 19, 2012

MEETING TIME: 9:00 a.m - 11:00 a.m., Georgian College

ATTENDANCE: Cuthbertson, R. (Welcome Centre – Newmarket); Douglas, L. (LIP, recording secretary); Hie, H. (Georgian Employment Service); Holt, R. (LIP); Gamache, G (La Clé d'la Baie); Lee, S. (LIP); Laycock, S. (Simcoe County Workforce Development Board); Pacheco, D. (TRACKS); Persaud, C. (Turning Points); Scott, K. (County of Simcoe); Whittington, P. (Georgian College; Chair); Woodrow, L. (Career Centre, Barrie); Zeng, M. (Barrie Chinese Community Association)
REGRETS: Black, B. (Simcoe-Muskoka Workforce Development Board); Brown, D. (Social Enterprise for Canada); Lewis, I (Bradford Works, CONTACT); Low, K. (Northern Lights); MacEachern, M. (FOCUS); Newell, D. (Northern Lights); Schlicter, S. (City of Barrie); Smith, T.P. (Greater Barrie Business Enterprise Centre); Speers, A. (ScotiaBank); Terrace, M. (Social Enterprise for Canada)

SUBJECT: Employment Sub-Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed the sub-council, and members introduced themselves.

P. Whittington provided a brief overview of the first 2 meetings: The role and scope of the sub-council and identification of issues were broadly discussed at the meeting of October 19. Trudy Parsons, Millier Dickinson Blais, was a guest speaker at the meeting on November 23, and spoke of her experiences with the Niagara Workforce Development Board. A proposal to consider moving forward in developing a similar board in Simcoe County was made, with no final decision at that meeting.

2. LIP Update – Statistics and Focus Group Results

S. Lee provided a summary of the research conducted to date through the Community Development Day, newcomer focus groups, online survey, key informant interviews, and the Queen's University Executive Decision Centre exercise. The responses clearly indicate that Employment was a top priority. Factors, including cultural sensitivity, diverse workforce, career opportunities, networking opportunities for newcomers and employers, internships, jobs, credential recognition, foreign experience recognition, and the lack of available resources were noted in the research. S. Lee briefly reviewed the responses to the questions asked at the focus groups, and noted that an employment agency was the first place that most of the participants went upon arrival. Consider that you as an employment stakeholder may be the first contact the newcomer has!

A summary of the online survey was circulated to members. Employment opportunities and recognition of employment experience were perceived to be important factors in a welcoming community.

S. Lee presented a case of a newcomer family that had difficulty settling in the area because of unemployment and other stress factors. It was presented for discussion on what can be done in these types of situations. The noted challenges for employment organizations included time limitations to

undertake employment education; limited funding available as fewer not-for-profit organizations here than other communities; and agencies may not have the mandate.

Comments, following the presentation, included:

- The research reinforces what they hear regarding employment and housing
- Unemployment and highly skilled situations not uncommon
- Transportation and housing are problematic county-wide.
- The need for ESL
- Accents –making an effort to listen to newcomer. Some newcomers change name on resume to anglicize.
- Employers seeing what we're hearing from LIP. Reinforces opportunity for employers/HR to see the benefits of a diverse workforce, newcomers gaining Canadian workplace experience, making appropriate referrals into community, and providing an assisted level of service
- Statistically, it takes 10 years for newcomers to reach level of Canadian counterparts.
- Ensuring practices, staff skills, and policies are supported by employers.
- Provide cross cultural training sessions.
- Expand knowledge of different cultural celebrations – practical things for the workplace.

The question, *do agencies refer newcomers for volunteer placements?* , was presented with the following responses:

- Ontario Works strong on volunteer placements
- Not a formalized process but is included in action plans to look at volunteer placements
- Depends on goal – employment vs. language – the first choice is for a paid position and for employer to make investment in the newcomer
- Maintain a list of volunteer organizations that the newcomer could apply to.

3. Establishing an IEC and Community Comparisons

R. Holt provided an overview of the ALLIES Toolkit on establishing an immigrant employment council (IEC), which was circulated to sub-council members prior to the meeting. Briefly summarized were the IEC's role, questions to consider before taking on the role, making the decision to go ahead with an IEC, how to get the buy-in from stakeholders, how to get started, the different Phases (1-feasibility study; 2-interim planning; and 3-operations), managing relationships and expectations, what a successful IEC looks like, governance, marketing, communications, challenges, etc. Examples are provided in the toolkit. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation will be circulated to members by email for further reference.

A copy of the organizational structure of Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) was distributed at the meeting. R. Holt reviewed the reasons why Waterloo chose this model, its mission and purpose, organizational structure, how they developed a network host, steering committee and working group structures.

R. Holt reported that the Simcoe Muskoka Development Board provided financial support to develop a resource guide for employers in Simcoe County on *Why Hiring Immigrants makes Good Business Sense*, which is based on the Niagara employers' guide. The guide should be finalized and in circulation by the end of March.

Discussion on establishing an IEC followed the presentation:

- Step One → are we ready?
- Environmental scan – data already exists
- Timeframe for initial startup → 1-3 years

- Feasibility study – viability of IEC? Have specific data compiled in one spot - study conducted through LIP?
- Funding available for initial steps → LIP could conduct study
- Wider environmental scan which will feed into IEC
- IEC doesn't replace what's here – enhances it.

4. Next Steps

- review earlier discussions
- do inventory of what's going on in the employment community → share best practices
- Identify areas of need
- establish a smaller working group on IEC
- work with LIP in conducting a feasibility study
- arrange meetings on a regular basis to maximize attendance
- Look at longer term priorities.

Action Items

- Send out a call for interest on the IEC working group (*P. Whittington/L. Douglas*)
- Questions for working group → where staff should take proposal – think about commitment → feasibility study
- Meetings will take place on the 4th Thursday of each month, – 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., location to be announced (*L. Douglas*)
- Best practices presenters for next meeting: *Rachel Cuthbertson, Welcome Centre, & Gyslain Garmache, Le Clé d'la Baie*

5. Other Business

Cultural Competency: C. Persaud provided an overview of the Train the Trainer workshop on cultural competency which was offered recently in Barrie by the Hospital for Sick Children. Main concepts include the people serving and people who are being served, where are we as individuals and what are our biases?, systemic change - adapting resources to needs of client, openness and awareness to differences and commonalities, and serving the family not just the individual. The training can be customized to the organization. The timeframe required to do the training would be 3 sessions of 3.5 hours to be effective, with 8-20 attendees.

Transition to Work Project: G. Gamache, La Cle d'la Baie en Huronie, reported that the Association Culturelle francophone's Transition au Travail project will allow the sponsorship of 24 francophone youth between the ages of 16-30 to gain skills through classroom instruction on topics such as goal setting, conflict resolution, the job market and participating in 6-week work placements.

Documents: *Building Canada's Prosperity* (Govt of Canada Progress Report 2010 Foreign Credential Recognition) and *License to Succeed Annual Report 2010-2011* (Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner) were distributed at the meeting.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on February 23, 2012, at 9:00 a.m., location TBA.