



LONDON & MIDDLESEX
LOCAL IMMIGRATION
PARTNERSHIP

LMLIP Day of Learning: Building a Welcoming Community for Immigrants in London & Middlesex

Summary Report

**Prepared by: Huda
Hussein**



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Introduction

On March 1, 2017, the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP) organized a Day of Learning to identify stakeholders who are involved or who could become involved in creating a more welcoming community for immigrants in London and Middlesex and discuss strengths, barriers and explore opportunities for creating a more welcoming community for immigrants in London and Middlesex. For details on how the day unfolded, please see the Agenda for the day on page 3.

The session also highlighted an art project, *Photo Voice*, which captures the journey of immigrants as they settle in Canada.

The following is a summary report reflecting the discussions, and identifying tangible actions for the community to explore implementing.

LMLIP Day of Learning: Building a Welcoming Community for Immigrants to London & Middlesex

Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Siloam United Church, 1240 Fanshawe Park Road East

Anticipated Outcomes

- Identification of stakeholders who are involved or who could become involved in creating a more welcoming community for immigrants in London & Middlesex
- Exploration of conditions for creating a welcoming community; and developing an action plan and/or resource for creating a more welcoming community

12:30 **REGISTRATION**

1:00 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

1:05 **GREETINGS**

Mayor Matt Brown, City of London
Aina DeViet, Deputy Mayor, Middlesex Centre and Councillor, Middlesex County

1:10 **WHAT IS THE LONDON & MIDDLESEX LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP?**

Huda Hussein, Project Coordinator, LMLIP

1:20 **THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN BUILDING A WELCOMING COMMUNITY**

Jennifer O'Brien, Journalist

2:00 **BREAK AND NETWORKING, INCLUDING A CHANCE TO VIEW THE PHOTOVOICE EXHIBIT BY BHARATI SETHI**

2:20 **FACILITATED ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS**

Questions for discussion:

- What are the strengths of London & Middlesex as a welcoming community?
- What are the barriers to being a more welcoming community?
- Identify two areas in which the London & Middlesex community could do better in welcoming and integrating immigrants.
- What concrete steps could be taken in each of these areas to build a more welcoming community?

3:10 **GROUP DISCUSSION AND BUILDING A CONSENSUS**

3:50 **WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS**

4:00 **CLOSING**

A Community Initiative of Individuals and Organizations

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Discussions

This section highlights the discussion on strengths and barriers of the London & Middlesex region in welcoming immigrants.

Strengths:

- a. Resources and Services
- b. Perceptions and Attitudes

a. Resources and Services

- Many organizations support immigrants. Immigration is on the radar of services and organizations
- Transparent communication among service providers, funders, government so that services are there for newcomers
- Activities and education programs for newcomers
- Diversity exists in London /diverse population attracts more diversity
- Neighbourhood community centres
- Distribution of Family Centres across the City
- Ontario Early Years Centres
- London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership
- Settlement Services well spread throughout the city – well dispersed
- Libraries
- Culture Works
- Ontario Works in neighbourhoods
- Established services and agencies that collaborate
- Strong cross-sectoral partnerships. Services are coordinated - continuum of services available and we work in collaboration with one another to best serve newcomers
- London is the “right size” – smaller size allows newcomers to see people who look like them, feel connected
- London is a second settlement site – immigrants settle first elsewhere and then choose to come to London. Believe there is growth in London as a second settlement site. City is attractive: beautiful parks, good recreation facilities, centre for hospitals, low crime rate
- Settlement Workers in School (SWIS) and the Library Settlement Program (LSP) enhance the sense of welcoming newcomers. SWIS workers in schools have done a lot to show the welcoming side of the community. Londoners are for the most part friendly and welcoming

- Great educational institutions (Western, Fanshawe)
- London Police have a cultural diversity officer and the city has a Diversity and Inclusion Specialist in Human Resources
- The City's Strategic Plan, Community, Diversity & Inclusion Plan; and the Immigration Strategy
- Immigration Portal
- Information shared about London and services at points of entry
- Quite well organized, community infrastructure seems to be there
- Good resources available but need more awareness
- We are a welcoming centre, but need to focus more on what happens beyond arrival
- Two words to describe the strengths: open community and many services available throughout the city for immigrants.
- Availability of a number of targeted programs
- Programs in neighbourhood community centres that engage all age groups
- Spectrum programs and their affordability
- Programs that stress diversity
- Media is noticing and promoting information on diversity
- Public Library has targeted programs that aim at educating the public on issues related to immigrants (facts vs myths) and how to effectively welcome newcomers as the library is a key point of entry
- School administrations are very helpful

b. Perceptions and Attitudes

- London wants to be a welcoming community and has taken steps to do so. Community at large at various levels is very supportive and newcomers report feeling supported. Many support services are engaged in further development of a welcoming plan (look at attendance for this event)
- Active interest by elected officials who are engaged in building a welcoming community. Having the City of London and provincial government on board is positive
- Testimony of one of the participants at the table: "I feel welcome in London. I came to London two months ago and I am participating today to this meeting and my voice is heard and listened to. For me it's amazing and I really feel that London is a welcoming community."
- Promotion of immigration and diversity in public messages from city administration
- Active and immediate response to events that take place locally: materials, visibility of response is important and would indicate that the community is ready to accept. Ability to react quickly in time of need

Barriers

- a. Perceptions and Attitudes
- b. Programs and Services
- c. Opportunities for Integration
- d. Employment and Financial Security

a. Perceptions and Attitudes

- Perception of citizens themselves, their bias and lack of knowledge/awareness. Preconceived perceptions about immigrants
- We can't let the few negative voices dominate the conversation/get the most coverage
- Welcoming city at the top level and service providers but there is something missing at the middle level – still a very strong sense of “us vs them”
- Underlying attitude of non-acceptance for newcomers, lack of information/knowledge causes fear, bias, racism
- Lack of funding to address racism in all its forms: blatant, hidden and systemic
- Acknowledge fear of the general population towards immigrants
- Need to look into personal biases and educate ourselves and call it out when you see /hear an injustice. Bust myths with facts and let go of stereotypes
 - Small town – ignorance among some Londoners (of global cultures)

b. Programs and Services

- Shortage of programs for men (i.e. facilitated groups)
- Lack of funding for interpretation and translation is problematic for clients with limited English and also to services that provide interpretation and translation services
- Not enough programs on mentorship for newcomers in their career from country of origin
- Recently, there has been too much emphasis on Syrians, leaving other refugees feeling or being left out – negative impact of increased funding and attention on Syrians, eg. donations of items or services only for Syrians may have decreased what would have been available for others
- Sometimes newcomers receive too much information and become overwhelmed and scared rather than the intended outcome of feeling prepared/integrated
- Need for cultural competencies embedded in school curriculum and the work place in all sectors

- French speakers have a large number of barriers – all refugees go to London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) but the referral to the French services/French schools is not being done properly and therefore some of those newcomers fall through the cracks

c. Opportunities for Newcomer Integration

- Media needs to play a role in educating on our reality and run articles more often that are fact based on immigrants' contributions
- Provide employment opportunities – City of London to play a role in setting example of diversifying its work force. City does not show commitment to attracting and retaining newcomers through its budget, hiring practices, etc.
- Children's Aid Society – misunderstood resource – feared so avoided and not used effectively
- Integration is a two way street: the community at large and newcomers need to learn about each other and how to interact with one another
- Integration and navigating the system of services in the city is complex – all working towards the same goal but sometimes a lack of awareness – need for clarification of who does what and avoid duplication
- More advertisement about and awareness of services, to improve system navigation and avoid duplication
- Schools need to make changes in the way they make families feel more welcomed and more inclusive
- Communication barriers among leadership of organizations. Lack of real teamwork at times: funding does not always encourage inter-organizational referrals as funds are based on clients served
- Resources are available but funds are lacking to sustain important projects/services/programs
- Available low income housing is often substandard and not enough available so waiting lists are long

d. Employment and Financial Security

- Unemployment rate is high
- Lack of response from employers to hiring newcomers, discrimination when reviewing resumes (newcomers "whiten" their resumes). Employers' lack of understanding about international experience and qualifications – need to educate themselves
- Need funds to encourage employers to hire newcomers with no experience

- Meaningful work – leading to financial security
- More mentorship programs and volunteer opportunities
- Discrimination in the workplace
- Meaningful work is tied to one self worth/family. Negative impact of not having a job on the family
- Employment challenges and barriers discourage feelings of being welcomed/integration

Areas for Action to Enhance Welcome-ability of London & Middlesex

Based on the information collected from a dotmocracy exercise, the following is the action plan to create a more welcoming community in the region.

- a. Education and Countering Negative Attitudes and Perceptions**
- b. Employment**
- c. Services and Collaboration**
- d. Transportation**

The following areas which align to the above noted themes, have received the highest number of dots:

a. Education and Countering Negative Attitudes and Perceptions

1. Diversity training for organization and businesses (18 dots)
2. Stand up to prejudice/discrimination at corporate, community and individual levels (16 dots)
3. More workshops on anti-racism on March 21st; or during Sunfest and Open Doors; more myth busting presentations and sign up for #make it awkward (13 dots)
4. Public education to shift community thinking (8 dots)
5. Information campaign to dispel myths and educate public, to reduce fear and prejudice (23) dots)
6. Be an Ally; call it out when you see or hear about social injustice (22)
7. Acknowledge the fear that exists in our communities and address it through education: (18)
 - a. Social media campaigns
 - b. Online (YouTube) videos/resources
 - c. Newspapers / blogs
 - d. Rick Mercer Rants
8. Change needed at the grassroots/neighbourhood level (central place for facts; education and training; tools to build skills to combat prejudice/discrimination) (9 dots)
9. Engage long term residents [established immigrants] to welcome newcomers in neighbourhoods (9 dots)

b. Employment

1. Create a resource list of employers who are willing to hire/mentor and work with newcomers (mentorship programs...)(16)
2. Recognize foreign credential more easily and advocate for this in government (12)
3. [Provide] Employment opportunities (9 dots)
4. Private businesses and organizations to examine hiring practices - diverse and inclusive recruitment policies (8 dots)
5. Enlist support of organizations/ businesses to promote volunteerism; support newcomers and encourage them to volunteer (9 dots)

c. Services and Collaboration

1. Increased synergy within all the services – active collaboration within service providers (9 dots)
2. More accessibility to English classes, childcare support and more persons to teach, more classrooms (6 dots)
3. We are rich in resources but need to be better at networking, promoting and sharing the information (7 dots)
4. Information sharing collaboration (eg., credentials for employment) (3 dots)
5. Referrals to other agencies when and as needed and updating list of services (8 dots)
6. Family Centres should provide information to newcomers as a one-stop-shop for information (5 dots)

d. Transportation

1. Better transportation in rural areas (4 dots)

Conclusion & Next Steps

The report highlights our region's strengths, barriers and provides suggestions on opportunities and tangible actions that will help our community to work together in order to create a more welcoming community.

Next steps:

- The London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP) Central Council and Sub-councils will review actions that align with the *LMLIP 2016-2019 Strategic Plan*
- LMLIP will explore working with and/or supporting existing initiatives to implement effective strategy
- LMLIP will support and collaborate with established initiatives to raise awareness among employers of foreign trained individuals
- The community and service providers are encouraged to explore implementing actions that align with their mandate and areas of focus

We recognize that some of the suggested steps may not be followed through immediately, such as the credential recognition process. This may be brought to the attention of the government with the understanding that it is the regulatory associations who determine the licensure process.