



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

Status Update on the Canada-Ontario-Toronto Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Immigration and Settlement

Date:	June 11, 2008
To:	Executive Committee
From:	Shirley Hoy, City Manager
Wards:	Citywide
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

Since its signing in September 2006, the Canada-Ontario-Toronto Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has advanced the City's intergovernmental and partnership agendas. It has improved the City's relationships with the provincial and federal governments in the area of immigration and settlement through an effective and empowered partnership made possible by the agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is for information only.

Financial Impact

This report has no financial impact.

Equity Impact Statement

The agreement strengthens the ability of Toronto to work in partnership with the governments of Ontario and Canada to address immigration and settlement policy issues of interest to Toronto's residents, including equity seeking groups.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on February 5- 8, 2007, City Council ratified a Canada-Ontario-Toronto Memorandum of Understanding on Immigration and Settlement (MOU) that was signed by the Mayor, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in September, 2006.

Council requested the City Manager to provide a progress report after the MOU had been in place for the first year. This report responds to Council's request.

The full MOU document can be accessed at:

www.toronto.ca/immigration/pdf/mou_on_immigration.pdf

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The MOU was developed pursuant to a commitment in the 2005 Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), which recognizes that the City of Toronto is to be formally consulted on immigration issues. COIA deals with the funding formula respecting the federal and provincial governments' roles in language training and settlement services. Therefore, the Toronto MOU is not a funding agreement. Rather, it formalizes a collaborative partnership on immigration and settlement issues that affect Toronto. As a partnership agreement, the MOU permits collaboration on research and policy and program development as well as the identification of possible local joint initiatives.

The MOU focuses on four priority areas of mutual interest to the three governments:

- access to employment
- access to services
- access to education and training, and
- citizenship and engagement

The MOU is consistent with Council's goal, outlined in the Immigration and Settlement Policy Framework, to secure formal representation at federal and provincial discussions about immigration and settlement. It is also consistent with the City's broader intergovernmental objective of having a seat at the table in policy discussions that have an impact on Toronto.

The MOU has brought Toronto officials to the table of immigration and settlement policy discussions in two ways. First it has established a senior staff level MOU Steering Committee to discuss Toronto-specific immigration issues and oversee the implementation of the MOU. Second, it has formalised Toronto's participation, in its own right, in Federal-Provincial discussions within the scope of COIA.

COMMENTS

The MOU does not alter municipal roles and responsibilities defined in current constitutional arrangements. Immigration and Settlement is a federal area of jurisdiction. The MOU provides a forum for policy discussions in which the city participates as a partner government, and not merely a stakeholder.

Agreements like the MOU are vital for the city to forge long term, enduring staff relationships at the institutional level that transcend changes in governments. The agreement sets an important precedent and will play a role to complement other larger framework agreements such as the recently signed Toronto-Ontario Cooperation and Consultation Agreement. It is a practical model of vertical collaboration with great potential.

The Steering Committee working relationship is new and still evolving. This agreement represents a new way for the three orders of government to work together. The working relationship is leading to increased staff engagement, collaboration and improved access to information that is essential to inform city, provincial and federal decision making. It is also facilitating better communication and collaboration across policy silos within both the federal and provincial bureaucracies.

Work to date has focused on three key areas:

1. The City has staff representation on each of the COIA working groups on language training and settlement. This allows the City to provide direct input into future federal and provincial policies and programs and learn of any changes that might affect City services.
2. The MOU Steering Committee has jointly agreed on a work plan focusing initially on four area of importance to Toronto that relate to the MOU objectives. This work plan is an important component and vehicle to promote policy dialogue. The current work plan items are:
 - Conducting research on the Federal Temporary Foreign Worker program. This work will further the understanding of the role of these temporary residents in the City's economic and social development.
 - Undertaking a scoping study to develop an inventory of settlement-related services in the city including an in-depth examination of specific neighbourhoods. This has the potential to further efforts at horizontal and vertical collaboration in policy, program planning and coordination by utilizing a place-based approach. This will support the city's efforts to strengthen neighbourhoods and promote social inclusion across our diverse population.
 - Facilitating further information and data sharing through the establishment of a formal exchange agreement. This will help inform decision making, enhance

our capacity to assess the impacts of legislative and regulatory changes and to identify relevant research partnerships with all orders of government. It is also anticipated that collaboration on data exchange will influence the type of data that Statistics Canada gathers and the level of aggregation of the data to make it more relevant to the City's needs.

- Establishing an annual cycle of regularly scheduled meetings for policy discussions and planning. These meetings provide an avenue for further information and consultation on the impacts of federal and provincial legislative and regulatory changes on the city.
3. The development of the MOU workplan is strengthening intergovernmental staff relations and project collaboration across program areas on a number of issues. The specific workplan items are useful undertakings in their own right. They are also instrumental in familiarizing City, Provincial and Federal officials with each other's issues, perspectives, decision-making processes and institutional cultures. The trust built through the joint development of the workplan enables the partners to bring other issues and ideas to the table for information and comment.

The MOU has facilitated successful project collaboration. One example is the Immigration Portal on the City of Toronto web site, which provides improved access to information about Toronto to immigrants, available from all three orders of government. The portal is found on the Living In Toronto section of the website at: <http://www.toronto.ca/immigration/>

Another example is the "Local Immigration Partnerships-Toronto Neighbourhood Partnerships", a new Toronto-specific settlement funding call issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada with the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). City staff are actively participating to promote the success of the project contributing knowledge of Toronto's neighbourhoods, community agencies and immigrant residents. Toronto's participation in this project, funded by a federal settlement program under the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), is significant given the City's status as a partner order of government, influencing local priorities for the allocation of federal settlement funding in the city. The project will play a role to advance the City's Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy of promoting and furthering broad, collaborative, neighbourhood centred approaches by all orders of government.

Policy discussions are continuing through a structured, annual meeting cycle to make linkages between the MOU objectives and key City, Federal and Provincial policy frameworks. The City's Agenda for Prosperity and place-based neighbourhood strategies are helping to frame the discussions, given the vital connection of immigration and social inclusion with the economic performance of the city.

The future work of the MOU will include engagement with the broader community in these policy discussions.

CONCLUSION

The MOU has not resolved all intergovernmental relationship problems. For example, the Federal Government chose not to consult with the City of Toronto (or other municipal governments) prior to introducing changes to the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act through Bill C-50. However, the MOU is providing a framework that promotes government to government collaboration. It is fostering the development of institutional relationships that will be enduring. And it has created a structure where it is possible to discuss immigration-related matters of common interest beyond the specific workplan items. This should contribute to more informed, better policy development by all three governments.

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SIGNATURE

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