

May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014

Attn: Community Development and Recreation Committee

CD29.10 Toronto Newcomer Strategy, 2014 - 2016 Implementation

My name is **Haweiya Egeh** and I am a **Service Collaboration Coordinator** with the **Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership** working out of **WoodGreen Community Services**. To give you some background, the Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership (TSLIP) is a community partnership focused on developing local settlement strategies that coordinate and enhance service delivery to newcomers while promoting innovation and efficient use of resources. Our **vision** is that newcomers in the Toronto South region feel welcomed, safe, supported and empowered in achieving their settlement goals.

I know that this vision is shared by the Toronto Newcomer Office and Toronto South along with the other regional LIPs, work closely with committed City staff to improve access for newcomers to community based as well as City services. Given that there are so many actors engaging in settlement within the City of Toronto, coordinating these services becomes a large and often difficult task, and I applaud the Toronto Newcomer Office for putting together a plan that begins the process of ensuring that newcomers in this City are supported.

It is a fact that the City of Toronto is the main destination for newcomers arriving in Canada. In fact, Toronto is also the main destination for the secondary migration of newcomers from other parts of Canada. As such, newcomer demand for the services that the City of Toronto and other social service providers in the community deliver is great and navigating this vast web of resources can be intimidating and in some cases, prohibitive for the newly arrived. This is why it is essential for access to be culturally appropriate, linguistically accessible, and demonstrably impactful. The Toronto Newcomer Strategy goes a long way in proposing how this task can be accomplished with other City units and community partners. Promising coordinated activities planned for 2014-2016 include exploring opportunities for settlement workers to offer services on site at select employment centres with Toronto's Employment and Social Services (TESS) unit, and working with Economic Development and Culture and TESS to facilitate the promotion of Toronto's entrepreneurship programs to the settlement sector and aspiring newcomer entrepreneurs.

However, more can always be done. Bureaucracies and community agencies alike must always be mindful in ensuring that the existence of a strategy for the enhanced inclusion of newcomers is not automatically taken as evidence that this is happening in earnest. It's important to assess on an ongoing basis that words are translated into deeds, and that impact is being felt by the individuals who these services are meant to support. It is also important, indeed crucial, to ensure that the City provides sufficient and sustained funds and supports to ensure that the Toronto Newcomer Office has the resources to manage effectively and to evaluate properly.

The “Creating Immigrant Friendly Cities” report outlines how cities around the world are playing leadership roles in making settlement happen for newcomers. The ongoing work in these other jurisdictions highlights the importance of sustained and measurable commitment for this type of work in order to ensure that it is impactful for the long-term.

A number of the recommendations from the “Creating Immigrant Friendly Cities” report refer to the need for the City to be more systematic about ensuring access to various services, many of which are services that newcomers utilize first upon arrival in Toronto. Given that we believe in the “No wrong door” approach to service access, these recommendations resonate for me in particular. As such, facilitating seamless and effective service access between units within the City for newcomers should be a main priority. This seamless access should also be extended to service providers within the community. Building and sustaining meaningful partnerships with community based organizations and initiatives is important given that these agencies are often another main access point for settlement services upon arrival for newcomers.

This is a big city, with many services to support newcomers. It is a tall order to coordinate all of these services and to measure the impact for newcomers accessing them, but it is an important task and different units within the city are already making strides to accomplish this. Indeed, this work is already well underway, and I believe that the “Creating Immigrant Friendly Cities” report compliments and leverages the Toronto Newcomer Strategy in suggesting practical ways to act and to ensure that this good work continues and is enhanced.

Sincerely,

Haweiya Egeh