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FINAL REPORT ON THE INCLUSIVITY ACTION PLAN

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated May 27, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Human Services Planning Coalition, the Inclusivity Action Plan Steering Committee and working groups be acknowledged for their efforts and accomplishments in making York Region an ethno-cultural inclusive community.
2. The Regional Chair and Regional Clerk be authorized to sign the necessary agreement to receive the funds if the applications submitted to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for implementation of the planned and new inclusivity activities are successful.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the final report on the Human Services Planning Coalition's (HSPC) Inclusivity Action Plan (IAP) highlighting the inputs, outputs, outcomes and recommendations that make York Region an ethno-cultural inclusive community.

3. BACKGROUND

IAP is a two and a half years collaborative efforts supported by HSPC, led and driven by 88 individuals representing 47 organizations and sponsored by various Provincial and Federal ministries

In recognition of the significant increase of immigrant population in York Region, HSPC identified the promotion of ethno-cultural inclusivity as a priority in 2003-2004. An Inclusivity Summit was held in January 2005 which attracted the participation of 180 representatives from various human service agencies, governments, public service bodies and ethno-cultural organizations. Based upon the discussion results of the Summit, HSPC adopted and launched the IAP on May 18, 2005.

An inclusive community accommodates diversity every day in every way. Diversity can take place in many forms, including disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, race,

colour and culture. Ethno-cultural inclusivity is the focus of the IAP because of the rapid growth in number of immigrants choosing York Region as their new homes. Ethno-cultural inclusivity is achieved when people of different ethno-cultural backgrounds live, learn, work and play together in a way that fulfills the feeling and reality of belonging to local communities. The goal of the IAP is to invest in York Region's capacity to welcome and integrate immigrants and to create social capital for a vibrant economy, a highly skilled labour and an enviable quality of life.

The IAP was planned and executed by a Steering Committee and six working groups. The Town of Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti was the Chair of the Steering Committee. The six working groups were responsible for the promotion of the following program areas:

1. Establishing welcome centres for new immigrants
2. English language development
3. Awareness of the changing ethno-cultural population profile
4. Creating opportunities for integration among children and youth
5. Volunteer and leadership opportunities
6. Organizational development

A summary of the outputs of the IAP is attached.

In the past two and a half years, the IAP was led and executed by 88 individuals representing 47 organizations and supported by HSPC. The total cost of human resources contributed by these leaders cannot be valued. The Region provides staffing and administrative support to the IAP throughout the project. It also provided funding from the Community Development Initiative Fund to support the research of the best practices model for the Welcome Centre. The Provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of supported administrative support through the Job Creation Program in 2007. The funding agreement amounted to \$100,000. Citizenship and Immigration Canada provides capital and operational funding for the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services amounted to \$4.1 million from 2006 to 2008.

In preparing for the completion the IAP, a program evaluation of the IAP was conducted by an external research team led by Doctors Michaela Hynie and Mina Singh of York University from October 2007 to January 2008 (report attached). The IAP Blue Sky Retreat was held on December 14, 2007 to discuss the outcomes of the IAP as well as the needs for another IAP (report attached). The results and recommendations of the evaluation and blue sky retreat will be discussed later in this report.

Local Immigration Partnerships Initiative

On February 6, 2008, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration announced a Call for Proposals to strengthen the role of local and regional communities in serving and integrating immigrants through the Local Immigration Partnerships initiative. The initiative will be fully funded by Citizenship

and Immigration Canada under the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement. The Regional Council decided to apply for funding from the Local Immigration Partnerships initiative as lead applicant at its February 21, 2008 meeting. If the funding application is successful, a local immigration community partnership council will be formed. The planning of future IAP in the areas of settlement and language training services should be conducted with reference of the proposed local immigration community partnership council.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

RESULTS OF THE IAP

The IAP has delivered most of planned outputs and accomplished three significant outcomes

Twenty two major outputs of IAP are illustrated in the attached summary. Most of the planned outputs were delivered. The implementation of some planned activities, e.g. Circle of Champions, Youth Mentoring Programs, was unable to proceed due to the lack of extra funding from external sources.

As identified in the Blue Sky Retreat and the program evaluation, the three most significant outcomes of the IAP are:

1. Creation of a successful model
2. Building of relationship of stakeholders
3. Development of the Welcome Centre

The program evaluation also supported the above results.

The creation of a comprehensive model such as the IAP was a significant outcome reflecting a collaborative community-based initiative and collective vision of building York Region an ethno-cultural inclusive community. This was an important step to build healthy communities in York Region. The IAP was highly successful in creating a collaborative process of engaging the community, profiling and addressing issues related to ethno-cultural inclusivity. There were significant interests from other jurisdictions to learn more about IAP model and adopt it to their environment.

Another important outcome of the IAP was building the effective working relationship among different levels of government, politicians, human service providers and community members. It created trust, partnership and collaborative work in the area of ethno-cultural inclusivity.

Finally, the founding of the Welcome Centre was the prime example of the numerous results of collaborative and integrated planning of the IAP. The first Welcome Centre was launched in Vaughan in June 2007, and four more were planned for York Region. It was a tangible form of increased visibility of the IAP that demonstrated collaboration

among service providers and different levels of government to provide improved delivery of services and resources to newcomers in York Region.

In conclusion, the IAP has demonstrated early success in building an ethno-cultural inclusive York Region.

The success of the IAP is attributed to a few major factors

The support and leadership given to the IAP by HSPC was a major factor. HSPC provided a safe space for discussion of ethno-cultural inclusivity by the broad human services sectors. As the reporting body of the IAP Steering Committee, HSPC also formed part of the governance of the IAP. HSPC was instrumental to develop trust among community partners and funders due to its credibility and political involvement.

The ground up approach of the planning and implementation of the IAP was another success factor. Although the broad goal and six directions of IAP were identified from the onset based upon the Inclusivity Summit, the actual work plans of the six directions were developed by their respective working groups. The IAP allowed the opportunities for stakeholders to plan and implement initiatives reflective to their needs and challenges in the six directions. The willingness of the community to come together from ground up and work on common goals highlighted the effect of this approach and strong community buy-in.

Finally, the awareness of the issues and challenges related to ethno-cultural inclusivity among human services organizations raised by the IAP led to their individual and collective action. Planned efforts of the IAP in crafting and promoting the key messages and information of the IAP were undertaken targeting human services organizations. Many agencies started two and a half years ago remained active in the IAP until the very end. There were new agencies which did not start in the beginning indicated their willingness to participate in future IAP or similar initiatives. The good will to make York Region an inclusive community has been snowballed to a critical factor in building healthy communities in York Region.

The successes of IAP did come with some challenges

The first challenge related to the process of the IAP. The most challenging aspect of IAP was the lack of sufficient human and financial resources to implement the plan. Apart from the additional funding and financial support contributed by the Region, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Citizenship Immigration Canada, members of the Steering Committee and six working groups contributed their efforts, expertise and resources in both planning all and executing most of the activities. Their in-kind contribution to the IAP was invaluable. However, the long process brought burden to the participants. Without sufficient IAP project staff support to execute the activities, the process was sometimes slow and time-consuming. Without additional financial resources, some planned activities are still pending.

The second challenge related to the goal of the IAP. Despite its success in strengthening the awareness of human services organizations in respect of ethno-cultural inclusivity, the IAP was unknown to most community members and the private sector. It is fair to acknowledge that the IAP never adopted “increasing the general public’s awareness on ethno-cultural inclusivity” as a goal, it is still important to add this as a new goal in future IAP or similar initiative.

Same as the above challenge, the IAP did not include the promotion of economic integration of ethno-cultural community members, especially newcomers, in the plan. This notion should become a new goal of any future IAP given the concerns of the barriers that newcomers face to contribute fully to the economic well being of the local communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the results of the program evaluation and retreat, the IAP Steering Committee and HSPC have drawn up the following recommendations.

The Regional Council should receive the report and acknowledge HSPC, IAP Steering Committee and six working groups for their contribution to the success of the IAP

Both HSPC, under the leadership of Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio and Mr. Bill Hogarth, and the IAP Steering Committee, led by the Town of Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti and chairs of the six working groups, contributed their efforts, expertise and resources to plan and execute the IAP. Their leadership and contribution should be acknowledged by the Council and the communities.

The goals and work of IAP should be continued

The efforts to build an ethno-cultural inclusive York Region have to be continued given the successes IAP has accomplished. The IAP Steering Committee recommends the continuation of the IAP under the same goal but with emphasis in the following areas:

1. The planned activities of the first IAP which are not implemented due to the lack of extra funding should be carried out in the new IAP subject to the availability of fund. These activities include: the implementation of the Charter of Inclusivity and the Youth Mentoring program in high schools. Members of the Organizational Development Working Group (Group 6) and staff should continue working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada on funding support for the implementing the Charter of Inclusivity and other planned or new inclusivity activities.
2. Economic integration of newcomers, many of them are members of ethno-cultural communities, should be a new field for the new IAP to address. Newcomers wish to

fully utilize their education, expertise and experiences in contributing to the local economy. They look forward to have meaningful employment and be integrated to the local labour market. Employers from the private sector are also keen to tap into the human resources contributed by the increasing newcomers. The new IAP should work closely with these two groups of stakeholders.

Based upon the review of the success factors and challenges of the IAP, the future IAP should:

1. Be sponsored and governed by HSPC to ensure support from all human services sectors and potential funders.
2. Be an umbrella project which encourages and support collective action of various working groups responsible for identified program areas.
3. Focus in obtaining sufficient program fundings from external sources to provide administrative and program support to the IAP.
4. A sustainability plan should be developed that IAP will eventually be led by the broader community rather than the Region.
5. Adopt and implement a program evaluation plan from the outset.

The new IAP should focus on ethno-cultural inclusivity

The program evaluation of the IAP identified that some IAP participants were concerned that the IAP did not address other aspects of diversity and inclusivity, e.g. age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. However, the changing population profile of York Region in respect of ethno-cultural diversity is significant, and needs to address these changes are pressing. The new IAP should continue focusing on ethno-cultural inclusivity. Nevertheless, HSPC is recommended to study the needs for addressing inclusivity of all aspects of diversity and draw up action plans. The Region Council and the Accessibility Advisory Committee should continue leading inclusivity in the aspect of disability.

The new IAP should work in collaboration with the planned local community immigration partnership council

York Region will have its own local community immigration partnership council within a year if the application for the Local Immigration Partnerships initiative is successful. Although the new IAP will focus far beyond settlement services which the Local Immigration Partnerships initiative is responsible for, IAP should seek opportunities to participate in the local immigration partnership council so that collaboration will be built.

RELATIONSHIP TO VISION 2026

The Region's Vision 2026 Plan adopts the building of sustainable natural environment, healthy communities and economic vitality as its major goals. The IAP has contributed to the building ethno-cultural inclusive communities in York Region which is an

important attribute of healthy communities. The recommended broad direction of a new IAP focusing in economic integration of members of ethno-cultural communities will contribute to strengthening economic vibrancy of the Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Major financial and in-kind resources for the new IAP will be sought from external sources

There are no additional financial implications to the Region in implementing a new IAP. Funding for a 0.6 FTE of IAP Manager is available in the 2008/09 approved budget of the Planning and Development Services Department. Discussions with external funding sources, e.g. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, are underway to solicit funding support for the new IAP in 2008/2009 and 2009/2010. Community partners will be involved in planning and implementing the new IAP as they did in the earlier one.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The new IAP will positively impact the whole Region. Local municipalities will be able to participate in the IAP focusing on their local needs and capacity.

7. CONCLUSION

The IAP has accomplished its goal in investing in York Region's capacity to welcome and integrate immigrants with emphasis in the three action areas of improving communication among service providers and newcomers, creating awareness of the rapidly changing ethno-cultural population profile and promoting representation of ethno-cultural communities in human services agencies. Twenty two major outputs have been delivered. Over \$4.2 m extra fundings from the Provincial and Federal governments were enlisted to support the IAP. Other municipalities and human services organizations regarded the IAP a successful model to promote inclusivity. The leadership and diligent work contributed by HSPC, IAP Steering Committee and Working Groups made IAP a successful initiative.

Promotion of ethno-cultural inclusivity should be continued and built on the early success made by the IAP.

For more information on this report, please contact Simon Cheng, Director, Human Services Planning at Ext. 1514.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)