



Hamilton

MINUTES
IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 8, 2012 - 6:30 pm
City Hall, 71 Main St. W., Room 192

Present: Aspy Ayrton, Arvind Sahay, David Hosten, Dena Honig, Dustin Rouse, Minh Trinh, Zafar Siddiqui, Maher Hamade

Also Present: Maxine Carter, Jaffar Hayat – City of Hamilton - Access & Equity Division

Regrets: Hana Pinthus Rotchild, Nasir Sarwar, Shuja Qureshi, Paul Hoang, Abdulkhaliq Herati, Joana Fejzaj, Mohamed Hamouda, Sumaira Khurshid, Thayra Marting, Isaac Acquah

Absent:

Guests: Zarghona Haidery, Latifa Alkhalidi, Mausomah Safri, Wahidah Jalili (members of an Afghani organization)

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST.

None declared.

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.

All were welcomed and everyone introduced themselves.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA.

Addition of item 6.2. To reschedule the Housing Help Centre Presentation for April 12, 2012 meeting.

A. Ayrton/D. Honig

To accept the agenda, as amended.

CARRIED.

4. Approval of minutes of February 9, 2012.

A. Ayrton/Z. Siddiqui

To approve the minutes of February 9, 2012, as amended.

CARRIED.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of February 9, 2012.

5.1 Roger Cameron – Committee Against Racism Chairperson

M. Carter informed the committee that R. Cameron, Chairperson for the Committee Against Racism has requested an opportunity to follow up regarding his presentation at the February 9th meeting of

Immigrant and Refugee Committee where he spoke about the development of the “Resource Centre”.

5.2 Workforce Census

The Chair recommended that committee members prepare some questions on the presentation and also ask the Human Resources staff what kind of contribution can be made by the committee members, for the implementation of Work Force Census. He also recommended that the data presented on some aspects needs to be broken down further to target some underserved groups. Some examples of questions should include: what percentage of the population are immigrants and what percentage of the newcomer immigrant population contributes to Hamilton’s Gross Domestic Product?

The following points were highlighted in the ensuing discussion on the issue of newcomers settlement in Hamilton:

Committee members also discussed what kind of strategy the City needs to put in place to attract new immigrants to the City. There are already a few other initiatives like the Local Immigration Partnership Council (LIPC) that can help the City to attract new comers to Hamilton.

A member shared her experiences regarding issues she encountered with the registration of small businesses in Hamilton and what she called “red tapeism”. Members felt that when newcomers experience these barriers, it should be brought to the attention of the Councillor who represents the area where they are trying to open the business.

The issue of degree recognition and how these barriers can affect the settlement process. Although some service providers offer courses and tools, it is not enough. New immigrants need to be matched with the relevant employers to help them to make them job-ready.

Due to the instability and economic down turn, young people are leaving Hamilton. Hamilton needs to develop an inventory of available or soon to be available jobs and careers and to put some focus on those areas with high turnover and demand.

One idea that was put forward as an initiative for the committee would be to conduct a study on the economic benefits and drivers of immigration in Hamilton and share its results with City Council.

Many new immigrants visit websites of different municipalities to collect relevant information even before coming to Canada. Unfortunately, the City of Hamilton's website does not offer much in this regard on the website as the web is only available in English. Hamilton is losing out by not offering different languages.

Immigrants should actually be targeted to come to Hamilton. Newcomers should be offered apprenticeship opportunities to assist them in getting the necessary experience and skills necessary for the labour market and provide them with Canadian experience.

5.3 HillBilly Heaven Hamilton.

The issues concerning HillBilly Heaven was discussed. It has been quite a contentious issue for many Hamiltonians.

6. Presentation.

No presentation this meeting.

7. Business Items.

7.1 Work Plan & Priorities.

A fuller discussion will take place at the April meeting however the Chair put forward some suggestions for one of the sub-committees.

- That the committee examine the economic benefits and drivers of immigration to Hamilton. It was suggested that the sub-committee approach McMaster University's Business Program to recruit a Masters student to undertake this research for committee.
- That Council develop a proactive immigration strategy.
- That an inventory of the jobs and careers needed in Hamilton be conducted.
- That an ad outlining Hamilton's immigration strategy be placed in international newspapers to attract potential newcomers to the city.
- That the City as an employer target young persons who have graduated from university and college and employ them while putting them through a really strong mentorship program. There are two universities and a major college in Hamilton.
- Hamilton is projected to have a labour shortage in certain trades such as electricians and plumbers.
- It was noted that Skills International matches immigrants and employees. They currently have 4000 immigrants in the data base.

**7.1.1 Discussion and review of Work Plan including Priority #3
Employment - Discussion.**

Tabled to the next meeting.

7.1.2 Establishment of Work Group.

Tabled to the next meeting.

8. Review and comment on reports, legislation and studies.

No reports.

9. Correspondence/Current affairs.

**9.1 Settlement Services Information - Invitation to Citizenship
& Immigration Canada.**

10. New Business.

10.1 Mr. Shabbir, Coordinator of the Bedbug Program from the Housing Help Centre, has put in a requested to appear before the Immigrant and Refugee Advisory in April 2012 to make a presentation regarding his program. Staff was requested to invite Mr. Shabbir to the April meeting.

11. Next Meeting Date.

The next meeting will be held on April 12, 2012.

12. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.