Council Direction:
Not applicable.

Information:

Background
On June 23, 2010, Council unanimously endorsed the made-for-Hamilton Immigration Strategy and Action Plan (Committee of the Whole Report 10-016, June 18, 2010, Item 7.2, CS09030(b)) developed by the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) in consultation with over 400 community residents.

Fully funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the HIPC comprised of 15 civic leaders reflecting key sectors in the community and established in January 2009 under the direction of the City of Hamilton through the Community Services Department.

The HIPC’s vision that “Hamilton is an inclusive community where the talents and experience that immigrants and refugees bring are valued because they are integral to making Hamilton the best place to raise a child” is the basis for the four strategic priorities that form the Immigration Strategy:

1. Building collective and collaborative leadership in pursuit of Hamilton’s immigration vision.

2. Strengthening the delivery of immigrant and refugee settlement services.
3. Creating a welcoming community and thereby the conditions that encourage immigrants to both settle and stay in Hamilton.

4. Creating and disseminating foundational knowledge of immigration and immigrants in Hamilton.

The Action Plan identifies over 50 strategic actions that will be undertaken by all community partners at all levels of the community collectively and collaboratively with support of the HIPC.

Accomplishments
Since June 2010, when the Hamilton Immigration Strategy was presented to Council, the HIPC has begun moving from the developmental phase of creating the Strategy toward preparing for its implementation. In so doing, the HIPC’s most recent work has focused on public education and awareness, establishing key partnerships within the community and continuing to build and disseminate foundational knowledge of immigrants in Hamilton. To this end the following are examples of tasks that have been completed:

- **Showcasing Hamilton’s Best Practices for Immigrant Integration Conference:**

  On September 23, 2010 over 200 service providers from Hamilton and other parts of the region gathered to hear from organizations at every level of the community (from neighbourhood Ontario Early Years Centres to institutions such as Mohawk College and TD Bank) about how they address issues of immigration. Over 30 presenters from five sectors (Settlement Services, Education, Health, Economy/Business/Employment and Housing) described their organization’s work to integrate immigrants into the community. This half day event was opened by the Mayor followed by a keynote address from the Chief Librarian of the Hamilton Public Library. The information sharing continued throughout the break periods with exhibits displayed by 17 community organizations and City Departments.

- **Immigration Strategy: Declaration of Intent:**

  In obtaining formal endorsement of the Immigration Strategy from stakeholders in the economic, social and cultural life of Hamilton, the signing of the Declaration of Intent indicates the organizational commitment to taking a proactive approach in integrating immigrant settlement issues into all planning and business processes. The Declaration, as a symbol of working collaboratively to implement the Strategy, has been signed by key stakeholders such as the Mayor, City Council, Presidents of educational institutions, Executive Directors of social services agencies and Chief Executive Officers of business and community organizations.
• **The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council Website:**

As the major communications vehicle of the HIPC, a website ([www.hamiltonimmigration.ca](http://www.hamiltonimmigration.ca)) has recently been launched to communicate the work of the HIPC. Its primary purpose is to engage the Hamilton community in the work of the HIPC and to increase public awareness of the importance of immigration to Hamilton. The website includes data about immigration in Hamilton, the Immigration Strategy and Action Plan, community events, signed Declarations of Intent, local immigration news, HIPC in the media, links to immigration resources and information about the HIPC such as member profiles, meeting details, research and discussion papers on local settlement and immigration issues.

• **Public Education:**

The following reports (both completed and in process) add to the growing body of information and research on immigration in Hamilton compiled by the HIPC:

- Immigrant and Refugee Health Needs and Service Provision in Hamilton
- Immigrant Services in Hamilton: Capacity Study
- Immigrants and the Labour Market in Hamilton (in partnership with the Hamilton Training Advisory Board)
- Newcomer Services in Hamilton: A Website Directory (in partnership with Inform Hamilton)
- Hamilton’s Informal Settlement Sector
- A Demographic Profile of Immigrants in Hamilton
- Early Learning and Immigrant Children in Hamilton
- Immigration and the Arts and Culture in Hamilton
- Bibliography on Immigration in Hamilton

Next Steps

As the HIPC progresses from the developmental phase to implementing the Immigration Strategy and Action Plan the following major activities will be pursued:

• **Organizational Development:**

In completing the made-in-Hamilton Immigration Strategy and Action Plan, the current members of the HIPC can feel a sense of accomplishment in having fulfilled their original responsibilities and mandate. The implementation phase requires a focused and specific set of skills, competencies and experiences from its members. To reflect this changing role, the Terms of Reference have been revised and approved (October 2010) as has a selection process for appointing members for this new phase of the HIPC.
The HIPC will take more of an advisory role in this phase providing a leadership forum in overseeing the implementation of the Immigration Strategy, advising the City of Hamilton and project staff and supporting the attraction, settlement, retention and economic participation of immigrants to create a more welcoming community for newcomers.

The selection process for the HIPC for this implementation phase will ensure that membership reflects an age, diversity and gender balance. It will also reflect the major sectors in the community as well as maintain some continuity of membership from the planning and developmental phase. Current HIPC members have been asked to submit names of potential candidates for this implementation phase as well as being invited to put forth their own names if they are interested in serving another term.

Those nominated for membership and interested in serving on the HIPC will be asked to complete a questionnaire in which they are asked to identify their qualifications for HIPC membership. Completed questionnaires will be assessed by the Selection Committee (consisting of HIPC Phase 1 Co-chairs, Project Sponsor and Project Manager) who will appoint 8 to 10 members for the HIPC Phase 2. Selection criteria will include the following requirements:

- Be responsible and respected leaders who have demonstrated and embrace the many benefits of a vibrant diverse population;
- Have an understanding of and commitment to the principles of partnerships and collaboration as a means to effect positive change;
- Value the multi-faceted role that immigrants can play in contributing to Hamilton’s growth and prosperity; and,
- Be linked to a wide network of leaders across a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

In addition, HIPC members will possess the following characteristics:

- Understand why “getting immigration right” affects us all;
- Has a Hamilton community agenda in addition to individual or organizational special interest, not just her/his own agenda;
- Recognize that successful collaboration produces results, not just structures and activities;
- Is able to balance keeping the peace and ‘stirring the pot’ to get solutions;
- Is open, reflective and can help the group find their way to the answers;
- Engages others with diplomacy and political astuteness;
- Is willing to put tough or delicate issues on the table and work them through;
- Is willing to pioneer, break through and find new ways;
- Has experience being a change agent;
- Has linkages or can connect to those who have linkages to a multitude of stakeholders; and,
• Brings a city of Hamilton focus.

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Funding:

Requirements based on the current contract with CIC must be completed and delivered by March 31, 2011. Negotiations with CIC are already underway for an extension of the Contribution Agreement for the next year commencing April 1, 2011 to execute the implementation of the Immigration Strategy.

Of 34 Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) being funded across Ontario by CIC, Hamilton, despite being one of the last to receive funding, it was one of the first to complete and submit its Immigration Strategy and Action Plan. It might be noted that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Jason Kenney, has described the LIPs as being on the “cutting edge and the future of settlement services in Canada” and “as central to the new Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement.” These messages also bode well for an increasing recognition of the municipal role respecting immigration and intergovernmental collaboration.

- Collaborative Partnerships:

Obtaining formal endorsement of the Immigration Strategy with the signing of the Declaration of Intent is the first step in engaging local stakeholders in supportive and collaborative working arrangements. Project staff will be largely responsible for supporting and encouraging partners in the implementation of the Immigration Strategy and Action Plan. The Immigration Strategy recognizes that the four strategic priorities must be pursued through and with a wide range of local stakeholders. Implementing more inclusive policies and practices that will facilitate the successful and prompt integration of newcomers necessitates on the part of every sector and key institution in Hamilton the obligation to involve and engage with diverse communities in a far more comprehensive way than has been achieved thus far. The HIPC will support and encourage all community partners, institutions, organizations, residents and levels of government to demonstrate their particular leadership roles in facilitating a more inclusive community.

- Settlement Services:

The HIPC, as noted above, has already undertaken a preliminary overview and assessment of settlement services in Hamilton with particular regard to those services funded by CIC. In recognizing the current situation with regard to Hamilton’s major settlement service provider, Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO), the content, delivery and funding of settlement services in Hamilton, like elsewhere, is constantly evolving. It is, and will continue to be, a constantly changing environment.
It also needs to be acknowledged that “immigrant services” and “the settlement sector” are somewhat elastic terms that lack clear parameters or definition. In understanding how the settlement process is negotiated and experienced by newcomers, it is therefore also important to recognize not only the “formal” services but also the major role played by informal associations such as faith organizations, community networks and voluntary groups in the city. It is also imperative to recognize the vital integrative role of municipal government services and other “mainstream” service providers.

Having already initiated a process of bringing settlement service providers together, some for the very first time, the HIPC will accelerate this deliberate collaborative planning process with key local stakeholders to ensure the maintenance of current levels of service provision and greater coordination and stability in meeting the needs of newcomers to Hamilton.

- **Public Education:**

  The pursuit of an inclusive, welcoming community must be built on a solid base of accurate information. Greater public awareness is required to combat many of the myths and misconceptions regarding immigration and to reduce people’s anxieties about immigrants. The HIPC will take proactive steps in developing a body of knowledge about the value and importance of immigration to Hamilton’s social, cultural and economic life. This public education role will be pursued within the context of developing a range of community and institutional partners in generating a body of public education materials that will be broadly disseminated and shared across Hamilton.

- **Attraction Strategy:**

  In pursuit of implementing a major strand of the Hamilton Immigration Strategy, the HIPC will support the development of a proactive Hamilton attraction strategy to recruit economic class immigrants, immigrant business investors and international students. This will entail identifying a package of support from pre-arrival recruitment and marketing to customised settlement and other retention support services. It will also involve consultation with a consortium of local stakeholders from different municipal departments, the education and university community, business and the settlement sector.

- **Immigration Workforce Development Strategy:**

  The HIPC will contribute to the development of Hamilton’s workforce in conjunction with the City of Hamilton’s Economic Development Strategy. Labour market experiences have a profound effect on how well newcomers integrate into the Hamilton community. Finding suitable employment is one of the biggest challenges
facing newcomers to Hamilton and one of the most important indicators of Hamilton as a welcoming community. Responsibility for integrating immigrants into the labour force involves a number of different stakeholders, including employers, unions, educational institutions, community agencies that serve immigrants, all three levels of government, as well as the individual immigrants themselves. A comprehensive set of actions are required to fully utilize the resources that newcomers to Hamilton bring to the local labour force.

• Review of Progress:

The HIPC will develop performance measures in order to monitor and evaluate the progress of the Immigration Strategy. Producing as full a picture as possible of how Hamilton is progressing towards a more inclusive and welcoming community is a long term process. It also requires working with local institutional bodies regarding their preparedness and willingness to bring forward their current performance data and to identify and fill the gaps of currently inaccessible or unavailable data. Therefore part of the leadership work of the HIPC is to encourage the filling of existing performance data gaps by those with the organizational mandate and responsibility to account for their own performance.

Once funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada has been secured in March 2011, staff will recommend that Council accept these funds and authorize and direct the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the CIC Contribution Agreement. Further updates on the progress of the HIPC will follow.