

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee

From: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development

Subject: Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in London and Middlesex, An Empirical Study by the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership

Date: September 21, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, the following report, Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in London and Middlesex, An Empirical Study by the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Executive Summary

In March 2021, the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP) partnered with the Network for Economic and Social Trends, Western University and Forum Research Inc. to conduct a rigorous survey on discrimination in the London and Middlesex community. The purpose of the survey and the empirical study attached as Schedule 1, are to understand local experiences of discrimination by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples, in comparison to those who do not belong to these groups. The LMLIP initiated this work with seven other regions of Southwest Ontario. The findings will be helpful in supporting the work of the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, London's Newcomer Strategy, and that of other LIPs, in our collective work to address discrimination in our communities.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan and the London Community Recovery Network

This report supports the City of London's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following strategic area of focus: Strengthening our Community, with the outcome: Londoners are engaged and have a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods and community and the expected result: Increase the number who feel welcomed and included.

As the London Community Recovery Network has pointed out, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalized communities including Immigrants, Indigenous Peoples and Visible Minorities.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

None

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to gain an in-depth understanding of experiences of discrimination in London and Middlesex to inform future actions of the LMLIP in its work

to address discrimination in our community.

2.2 Background

The London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership is one of over 80 Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada, funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada since 2009. Local Immigration Partnerships are collaborative community initiatives designed to strengthen the role of local and regional communities in serving and integrating immigrants. LMLIP is co-chaired by the City of London and a community volunteer, and its work is guided by a Central Council and five issue-specific sub-councils, which include educational institutions, community services and volunteers across sectors.

The theme of creating a welcoming community is one of the LMLIP's five strategic priorities with the following vision: Encouraging the London and Middlesex community to appreciate diversity and actively work to attract, support, and retain immigrants. The aspiration is that all residents welcome the full participation of immigrants into Canadian society and work together to eliminate racism and discrimination in all forms.

For several years, the LMLIP has worked on projects addressing racism and discrimination, including an All Are Welcome Here lawn sign campaign, and an annual All are Welcome Here conference held to mark the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In March 2020, the All are Welcome Here conference examined unconscious bias in housing and employment issues and in March 2021, the All are Welcome Here online conference included activities designed to increase awareness of the challenges and contributions of immigrants to our community. In light of the deadly attack of June 6th on an immigrant, Muslim family, the LMLIP is undertaking additional steps to address racism and discrimination.

While the media makes residents aware of high-profile incidents, data on everyday discrimination does not exist at the local level. The survey work, led by Western University's Network for Economic and Social Trends, was a natural extension of the LMLIP's cumulative work, and findings will be helpful in supporting the collective work in addressing racism and discrimination in London and Middlesex as well as other communities of Southwest Ontario. The following geographic areas of seven Local Immigration Partnerships are partnering with the LMLIP on similar investigations: Guelph and Wellington County, Hamilton, Huron-Perth, Niagara Region, Oxford County, Sarnia-Lambton, and St Thomas & Elgin County.

Survey methodology

A market research firm was retained to recruit participants, administer the survey, and collect the data. Respondents in the survey were contacted by telephone through random digit dialing of phone numbers in the region, and if they qualified to participate and agreed, were then sent the link to the survey to participate in either English or French. This process ensured a relatively representative sample of adults within each of the three groups. Targets of 300 Immigrants and Visible Minorities, 200 Indigenous Peoples, and 300 White Non-immigrants were set, and the final sample included 379 Immigrants and Visible Minorities, 164 Indigenous Peoples, and 286 White non-immigrants. Ethics approval was obtained from Western University's research ethics board. The results of the survey were analyzed by researchers of the Western University's Network for Economic and Social Trends, Mamta Vasvani, Ph.D, and Victoria M. Esses, Ph.D. Attached as Schedule 1.

2.3 Findings of the Survey

It is important to note that the survey was held in March 2021, prior to the June 6th attack on an immigrant Muslim family which resulted in the deaths of four innocent people.

Results of the survey showed that a greater number of Indigenous People in London-Middlesex report experiencing discrimination in the last three years compared to Immigrants and Visible Minorities and comparison White non-immigrants. Immigrants and Visible Minorities and Indigenous People perceived their experiences of discrimination as based on ethnocultural factors (i.e., race or skin colour, Indigenous identity, ethnicity or culture). In both the Immigrants and Visible Minorities group and the Indigenous Peoples group, the contexts for discrimination most reported included applying for a job or a promotion, at their job, while using public transit, in a store, bank, or restaurant, and when attending school. The most widely reported types of discrimination included inappropriate jokes, derogatory language, and verbal abuse. Immigrants and Visible Minorities also reported experiencing verbal threats and Indigenous People also reported experiencing physical threats. Perpetrators of discrimination were most reported to be middle-aged and White.

The empirical study leads to three recommendations to counteract discrimination. First, the report recommends promoting an environment that encourages victims of discrimination to report their experiences, with an online platform such as has been initiated in other locations referenced. Second, the results suggest that it is important to help victims of discrimination to use effective coping strategies so that they do not internalize the discrimination they experience. And third, and most important, is the recommendation to focus on strategies for preventing and counteracting the discrimination reported in London-Middlesex. The researcher findings recommend several anti-discrimination initiatives that take a multi-level approach to address the individual perpetrators of discrimination, bystanders, and organizations and systems.

2.4 Future activities of the LMLIP

Researchers involved in the study plan to present the findings on London-Middlesex in several forums, including LMLIP's Central Council, a meeting of NEST, and other community meetings. Once the seven other participating Local Immigration Partnerships of Southwest Ontario have reported on the data from the surveys in their own regions, they plan to work together to publish a joint report. These reports will provide recommendations for joint activities to address discrimination at the local and regional levels.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

3.1 Funding

All funding for the survey and report was provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. There is no municipal financial impact.

Conclusion

The empirical study commissioned by the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership provides valuable information on the experiences of discrimination in the broader London and Middlesex community. The analysis from this study includes recommendations to address discrimination that are useful not only for the LMLIP but also for the community at large. The findings of the study will be widely disseminated to the media, and to community groups with a particular interest in addressing discrimination in London-Middlesex.

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