

# **Towards a Greater Toronto Charter: Implications for Immigrant Settlement**

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## **Minutes from the Forum Towards a Greater Toronto Charter: Implications for Immigrant Settlement**

**Monday, September 18, 2000**  
**9:30 AM to 3:30 PM**  
**Metro Central YMCA, 20 Grosvenor Street, Toronto**

### **Agenda**

- Introduction by Ratna Omidvar, Executive Director, Refugee and Immigrant Program, The Maytree Foundation
- Opening Remarks by Alan Broadbent, Chairman, The Maytree Foundation
- Towards a Greater Toronto Charter, Implications for Immigrant Settlement, Laura Simich, Ph.D.
- Keynote Address by Michael Valpy, The Globe and Mail
- Focus Group Discussions
- Reports from Focus Group Discussions and General Discussion
- Closing Remarks by Alan Broadbent, Chairman, The Maytree Foundation

The Maytree Foundation is interested in exploring the implications of greater local autonomy for the immigrant and refugee sector. Initially, we sponsored a forum at Toronto's Metro Hall in October 1999 to take an introductory look at [Toronto's role in management and coordination of immigrant services](#). A smaller advisory committee was created to examine a range of options for enhancing the role of municipal government and local communities in decision-making regarding immigrant settlement and services. In order to move the discussion forward this daylong forum was held to further the ongoing development of discourse on immigrant and refugee settlement in Toronto.

The purpose of the Greater Toronto Charter movement is to champion local autonomy at a time when relations between local and senior levels of government need to be redefined. The paper **“Towards a Greater Toronto Charter: Implications for the Immigrant Settlement Sector”** by Laura Simich is an initial attempt to ask what greater local autonomy in Toronto could mean for the immigrant settlement sector in terms of policy and practice. It lays out basic issues and asks questions about what changes are needed and how they might be made. Specifically, would existing pressures and instability in the immigrant sector be resolved by greater local autonomy, and if so, how? And, what are the implications of the Greater Toronto Charter movement on immigrant settlement policy? (Please visit [www.maytree.com](http://www.maytree.com) to read the executive summary and full text of the paper.)

The forum was divided into 3 sessions

- 1) Presentations given by Laura Simich and Michael Valpy, The Globe and Mail
- 2) Four focus groups held to discuss a range of questions relating to the implications of local autonomy and the immigrant and refugee settlement sector
- 3) Reports on the focus groups and general discussion

The meeting's facilitator asked the focus group leaders to give a brief summary of their discussions based on the following questions:

- How are current definitions of settlement services adequate, and how would enhancing local autonomy remedy the inadequacies?
- What role should the Toronto Region play a role in creating coherence in economic immigrant selection, in training and integration into the local labour market, and in local economic development?
- What will the GTA Charter movement do to encourage wider participation among immigrants?
- How will the Charter help the region achieve a unity of social and economic purpose in settlement integration policy?
- What are the next steps to advancing autonomy for the Region and improving settlement policy and services?

## **Group 1**

- The discussion about local autonomy needs to be prefaced by discussion of the larger context of globalization and privatization, as well as the devolution of services and individual responsibility
- Definitions of settlement are not adequate; a broader definition is required including, i.e. a sense of belonging or attachment must be instilled
- Much of the work regarding settlement focuses only on the immigrant and therefore it should or needs to embrace mutual process between institutions and the larger society
- There was general agreement that greater autonomy is desirable for integration and coordination of services
- Services must be delivered in a holistic and comprehensive manner
- A critical mass of immigrants is important for moving this idea of autonomy forward; how is this going to take shape?
- An integrated settlement policy must be shaped by all stakeholders – more tables and/or discussions are needed to do this before we know how; however, this takes time and money to execute
- A concrete local role in economic development must be related to settlement (urban nominees program, support for immigrant run small business)
- Local autonomy can only work if accompanied by participation – representation of all
- An enduring role for the federal government in “nation building” and protection of individual rights must be ensured

## **Group 2**

- Local autonomy would help facilitate the bargaining position of the city particularly around certain issues such as licensing
- Autonomy would also help improve the coordination and management of immigrant settlement services provided it influences policy
- Autonomy can be viewed as a transition towards freedom and power in order to create policy which is developed “bottom-up” as opposed to “top-down”
- Distinct mechanisms should be created in order to have proper working relationships with the provincial and federal levels of government
- There is a need to view immigrants as “stakeholders” and therefore they must be included in the decision making process

## **Group 3**

- There was a short discussion regarding the role of the participants in the Charter Movement, i.e., are we feeding into the Charter or is the Charter a mechanism to broaden the conversation about the role of the city in the delivery of settlement services
- Existing models of settlement have been inadequate and have not met the needs of immigrants
- There is a need to look at settlement more broadly and implement a coherent strategy for settlement – the Charter will not necessarily “fix that problem”

- The relationship between the federal and local government was also discussed; how does one recognize the importance of the federal government in the delivery of settlement policy and service delivery, and yet talk about how local regions can have more input in terms of policy development?
- Overall the Charter process was viewed as a way of achieving greater local accountability and improving the overall quality of service delivery, however it was believed that fundamental principles should be developed in order to achieve this goal

#### **Group 4**

- A lengthy discussion occurred around the definition of settlement services which is often narrowly viewed as only “client-focussed” rather than involving broader change processes
- The definition of settlement needs to be extended to encompass settlement policy and support
- The definition must be more comprehensive to include health, housing, employment as well as other economic and social supports
- Supports must exist to enable participation politically, economically, socially and culturally
- There is a need for more effective, flexible, differentiated outreach and service provision
- Approaches need to be developed that liberate and realize the untapped potential of immigrants and refugees
- Agreement was reached that cities are more responsive on a daily basis to the needs of immigrants and refugees unlike the federal or provincial governments – “we are more sophisticated on the ground”
- Community voices are critical and therefore community engagement in the Charter process must occur
- There is potential for more local and regional economic capacity
- In order to support real political participation “the corridors of power to the people” must be opened, especially to those have not been traditionally represented
- A public communications campaign is needed to dispel myths surrounding newcomers
- The group addressed next steps which could include:
  - Exploring new revenue sources and other models of local autonomy
  - Identifying the political levers to accomplish greater local autonomy and the role city officials have in relation to the power and revenue bases
  - Extend the discussion to the wider Greater Toronto Area
  - It was also suggested that the federal/municipal relationship should be addressed in Bill C-31, the new immigration and refugee act
- The Charter process must have leadership that is reflective of the vision and goals of the city region and therefore be inclusive of all people

#### **General Discussion**

- A number of participants raised the issue of the implementing mechanisms of the Charter and that the success of the Charter lies in its implementation
- The group expressed a sense of frustration in trying to influence both the federal and provincial governments in changing policy

- One participant observed the Charter is “a very logical way to package a set of powers and responsibilities”
- However there is a need to create “processes and possibilities” to enable newcomers to participate fully in the decision making process of the Charter
- A participant suggested that a public education campaign is needed to educate the Canadian public about immigrant settlement and the potential the Charter could have

**The facilitator of the forum summarized 10 key themes of the day’s discussions.**

- 1) Identity
  - Toronto is not just for people who live in the city. It is seen as entity for people across the province and across the country
- 2) Citizenship
  - The city is seen as the basis for citizenship
  - Participation in the governance of a local community is a fundamental part of citizenship
  - It was also expressed that if the Charter does not enhance a newcomer’s sense of citizenship or participation then it would have failed
- 3) Process
  - The notion that becoming a citizen is a process
- 4) Access
  - The underpinning of subsidiarity in the Charter is that it provides access at the most local level
  - There was acknowledgement that perhaps the notion of access should be made more explicit in the Charter process
- 5) Leadership
  - There must be a tangible way in which people can participate and become part of the many discussions of the Charter process
- 6) Representation
  - The Charter must strengthen representation for newcomers vis-a-vis local governments, in order to succeed
- 7) Resources
  - There is a need to find a way for resources to be channeled to the local level
  - Until a municipality has control over certain elements of income tax the city will be unable to fully assume an autonomous role
- 8) Responsibility
  - If the city is to assume additional powers and additional responsibilities it must be able to demonstrate that it can exercise such powers effectively

9) Participation

- It must be ensured that the Charter is a means for encouraging all citizens to participate in the governance of the region

10) Opportunity

- There is need to make more explicit what opportunities the Charter presents to the region of Toronto –...“there’s an opportunity for us to craft our future and our destiny...and that there’s a need for everyone to participate in realizing that opportunity.

**Participants**

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<b>Name</b>		<b>Organization</b>
Phil	Abrahams	City of Toronto, CAO Office
Mary	Alberti	Family Services Association of Metro Toronto
Parveen	Amlani	Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office
Maria	Antonakos	Regional Municipality of Halton
Joan	Arruda	Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office
Morton	Beiser	Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration & Settlement (CERIS)
Kay	Blair	Microskills
Alan	Broadbent	The Maytree Foundation
Judy	Broadbent	The Maytree Foundation
Andrew	Brouwer	The Maytree Foundation
Susan	Brown	Toronto Training Board
Huda	Bukhari	The Arab Community Centre of Toronto
Oliver	Carroll	
Vincent	Ching	Regional Municipality of York
Brian	Conway	The Maytree Foundation
Tony	da Silva	Centre for Language Training and Assessment
Debbie	Douglas	Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
Teresa	Dremetsikos	Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
Peggy	Edwards	Skills for Change
Jan	Fix	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Usha	George	University of Toronto, Faculty of Social Work
Elizabeth	Gryte	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Anthony	Gubek	African Community Services of Peel
Barbara	Hall	National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Department of Justice
Ahmed	Hashi	Citizens for Public Justice
Shirley	Hoy	City of Toronto, Community & Neighbourhood Services
Jane	Jacobs	
Wendy	Kwong	City of Toronto , Public Health

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Rose	Lee	Access and Equity Centre, City of Toronto
Maisie	Lo	WoodGreen Community Centre
Sheine	Mankovsky	Trustee, Ward 18, Toronto District School Board
Julie	Mathien	City of Toronto, Social Development & Administration Division
Patricia	McCarney	University of Toronto, Department of Political Science
Susan	McCrae Vander Voet	Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples
Elizabeth	McIsaac	Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (AIPSO)
Amanuel	Melles	Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre
Faduma	Mohamed	Rexdale Women's Centre
Ratna	Omidvar	The Maytree Foundation
Eva	Pakyam	YWCA LEAP
Ceta	Ramkhalawansingh	City of Toronto, Equal Opportunity Division
Duberlis	Ramos	Hispanic Development Council
Tim	Rees	City of Toronto, Access and Equity Centre
Vanessa	Reid	
Ted	Richmond	CERIS
Ron	Rock	City of Toronto
Wesley	Romulus	Canadian Heritage
Mary	Rowe	MWR & Associates
Nury	Rugeles	Delta Child Care Network
Joy	Scth	Skills for Change
Uzma	Shakir	CASSA – Council of Agencies Serving South Asians
Donna	Shoom-Kirsch	JobStart
Rick	Sin	Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter
Kin-wah	Siu	CultureLink
George	Smitherman	MPP, Toronto Centre-Rosedale
Anita	Srinivasan	The Maytree Foundation
Donald	Stevenson	
Alan	Tonks	Greater Toronto Services Board
Michael	Valpy	Globe & Mail
Marilyn	Ziedenisberg	Citizenship and Immigration Canada