Submission to City of Winnipeg Executive Policy Committee

Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy

By Robert Vineberg, Council Member, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg

February 18, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about the proposed Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy.

We are very pleased that the City has accepted the recommendation of Immigration Partnership Winnipeg and is moving forward with this policy. But as Abdi Ahmed, our Director, has noted, we feel that the policy as proposed can only be considered as a first step. We really hope that it will not simply sit on a shelf but will actually become a living and evolving document. We would, therefore recommend that Council add to the policy a requirement that the CAO present a public progress report to Council at least every second year.

Last week, the province also announced immigration to the province of 18,905. While this is not an all time record - that occurred in 1912-13 when 43,813 people immigrated to Manitoba – it is the highest level of immigration since the Great Depression. These numbers are encouraging for the growth and prosperity of the city and the province.

Winnipeg is growing and prospering because increased immigration is driving its demographic and economic growth. Between the 2011 census and the 2016 census, the population of the Winnipeg Census Metropolitan Area grew by 48,000. However, if it were not for the 55,000 immigrants who arrived in those years, the population of the city would have dropped by 7,000 people. Winnipeg's life blood, as it was a century ago, is again immigration.

Last week, Statistics Canada released the latest demographic estimates for census metropolitan areas, as of July 1, 2019, and the Winnipeg CMA reached a population of 844,566. From July 1, 2018 to July 1, 2019, the population grew by 12,334. However, natural growth was only 2,712 and the CMA lost 6,448 people moving to other provinces while gaining only 296 people from other parts of the province. Without immigration of 15,774, the population would have declined by 3,440 in a single year.

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I cannot over-emphasize the importance of immigration to the city's demographic and economic growth, and to the city's tax base, over the past 20 years and that it is in the city's interest to invest in services for its new residents – because if this city doesn't, they will leave for cities that do.

Among services that are critical to immigrants, and has been identified by researchers and immigrant settlement practitioners as a key characteristic of a 'Welcoming Community' is public transit. Winnipeg is the largest city and the largest destination for immigrants in Canada without subway or light rail public transit. Winnipeg is faced with strong competition for immigrants from every other major Canadian city. We simply cannot afford to fall behind our competition.

I ask you as a citizen of this city to think big, as your predecessors a century ago did when over 30,000 immigrants a year poured into Manitoba.

The question is not, "Can we afford better services for immigrants?"

The question is, "Can we afford NOT to have better services for immigrants?"

And as with transit and all other civic services, when they are improved for immigrants we all benefit.

Biography:

Robert Vineberg's career in the Canadian Federal Public Service spanned over 35 years, of which 28 were with the immigration program, serving abroad, in policy positions at national headquarters and, most recently, as Director General of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Prairies and Northern Territories Region, based in Winnipeg. He retired from the public service in 2008. Mr. Vineberg has written and published several peer reviewed articles on immigration history and on military history. His book, *Responding to Immigrants' Settlement Needs: The Canadian Experience* (Springer), was published in 2012. He co-edited and contributed two chapters to *Integration and Inclusion of Newcomers and Minorities Across Canada* (McGill Queen's University Press, 2011), and has contributed chapters to *Immigration Regulation in Federal States: Challenges and Responses in Comparative Perspective* (Springer, 2014), *Immigrant Experiences in North America* (Canadian Scholars' Press, 2015) *and Reassessing the Rogue Tory: Canadian Foreign Relations in the Diefenbaker Era* (UBC Press, 2018). He is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax. He is also Chair of the Board of Governors of Immigration Research West, a member of the Council of Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, and a Senior Fellow with the Canada West Foundation. He is Past-Chair of the Board of Directors of the Immigrant Centre Manitoba and Past-Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Manitoba Opera. Mr. Vineberg has a BA in History from the University of Toronto as well as an MA in Canadian History and a Graduate Diploma in Public Administration, both from Carleton University, in Ottawa.