

Employment and Training Action Team, City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)
Presentation to the Community and Protective Services Committee, June 2008
Regarding: Immigrant Ottawa Initiative

Good morning/afternoon I am Cristina Pulido and I will be sharing this presentation with Nubia Cermeño. Both Nubia and I have had firsthand experience with coming to Canada in search of a better life. We will be speaking from our experiences about the issues dealt with in this Report.

We welcome this opportunity to comment on the Immigration Ottawa Initiative Report, as it is very important and has real potential to improve the lives of so many immigrant and refugees here or coming to the City of Ottawa. We hope to offer some insight for your consideration as the City moves forward on this important work.

This Initiative is well past its time – too many new Canadians are left to stand on the unemployment line, working in jobs that do not utilize their knowledge, training or skills. Often they end up in part-time low wage work. This Initiative offers some hope.

While we strongly support the “Social Inclusion” as part of “Economic Integration” (our participation in City for All Women Initiative has made it possible for us to speak to you today) - we believe the City’s active support in encouraging civic engagement of new Canadians is vital to our City and benefits us all!

We are concerned that, while the report speaks to the need to promote and involve new Canadians in social services like affordable housing, employment training and health programs, it fails to mention one of the most important - access to affordable child care!

Far too many women cannot take part in training programs or jobs because they cannot access child care. We think if the words that are written in this Report are to be realized the City must do a better job of dealing with the growing gaps in the community services that are vital to social cohesion – for us and all residents!

Nubia: We appreciate the dual focus this Initiative has taken to address the high unemployment rates among new Canadians. It was not too long ago that the focus was on the “deficits” in our language, resume writing and networking. It is good to see that the City is now focusing on what employers are doing or not doing to hire, retain and promote new Canadians – including the City as employer. For many of us this is good news.

Finally we are glad that the City is working in collaboration with local settlement and immigrant serving agencies. There is much knowledge and experience to draw from these organizations for dealing with the pressing issues many immigrant and refugees face as they adjust to their new country.

We do however want to confirm that it is the City that is ultimately accountable for ensuring the goals and objectives of IOI are met. That the focus be on finding good job matches that offer advancement. The focus must be on successful job placements rather than basing success and future funding on the number of immigrants that participate in various programs. We would also expect that desegregated

data will be used for measuring how well different populations are benefiting from these public investments.

We do want to express concern about the sustainability of this Initiative as so much of it seems to rely on short-term project-based funding. We are concerned that agencies are being asked to take on more and more without adequate or long term funding. We are concerned that expectations will be raised and then after three years if granting foundations move onto another issue these efforts may slip away – not because they were unappreciated but because there is not enough time for over-stretched agencies to write funding proposals, do the actual work and then write the reports.

It is important to focus on the work of finding good jobs for new Canadians and to know that we are building this over the long term – beyond the three year funding grants that are identified in the report.

Thank you