

Speaking Notes for Diversity Committee

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My Role

I am not here representing any person or entity. I do not have lived experience of being undocumented. I am here as a Windsorite and researcher interested in supporting diversity in our community.

I firmly believe that a well-considered access without fear policy has the potential to clarify and set in policy Windsor's already strong reputation as a welcoming and diverse community. Windsor is surrounded by cities that have sanctuary city or access without fear policies (Chicago, Detroit, London). Our goal is to support Windsor in adopting or reaffirming policies that are inclusive for people without immigration status. As you probably know, such policies often have the knock off effect of also supporting other newcomers to Canada.

As you know from reading the Memo, most people come to Canada with a recognized form of immigration status. They are our international students, our sponsored spouses and family members, refugees and the people who work on our farms.

These are also people who often have precarious immigration status, and lose it for a number of reasons. They might experience problems at work and have to change employer, they might experience domestic violence, they might have let their visa lapse, among other reasons. These individuals qualified to come to Canada, and in many cases they can regain their status, or can apply to gain permanent residency or citizenship.

An access without fear policy can support people in not losing status to begin with and regaining it once they have lost it. It can provide a pathway during a vulnerable time.

I am hopeful that the Committee can provide a forum to examine the possibilities of an access without fear policy in Windsor and recommend supports to Council.

What is sanctuary city and some basic info

You'll note in the memo we provided that we have not recommended that the city take on the term "sanctuary city". It is far too politically loaded and in fact does not reflect a modern day, Canadian understanding of what the policy is meant to do. The term "access without fear" or similar term – which has been taken on by Vancouver, London and Edmonton - is more reflective of what I think is achievable – namely, supporting people in accessing services.

Access without fear policies range widely in what they include.

Access Without Fear policies can function to:

- = set benchmarks for inclusion
- = promote good practice or advertise welcoming practices that already exist
- = promote diversity and support immigration and refugee policy more generally
- = improve police/ immigrant community relationships, including reporting of crime
- = encourage people to seek pathways toward status
- = create safer communities

So, in sum, there is no single AWF policy or sanctuary policy. Each city adopts its own and it means different things in different municipalities.

The part of these policies that usually generates the most feedback is from police services. This is why some cities do not include police services in their policies. For example, the City of Edmonton recently passed an access without fear policy that did not include police services in their policy at all, nor did London's.

I personally think it is worthwhile investigating policies in other jurisdictions that speak directly to how access without fear policies for victims and witnesses of crime. This would be one of the decisions that this committee could grapple with.

Another common approach is simply asking council to direct its funded services to develop or affirm policies that support people without status in accessing services.

Sometimes this is as easy as a one hour training or posting a notice on a website.

Sometimes it is an issue of longer term policy development. It very much depends on each organization.

Recommendations

I have been asked to provide recommendations as to what a policy might look like. We have of course drafted versions of what we think a policy might look like, but in my view more community involvement is required to ensure a policy makes sense and would be politically viable.

In my view, it would be important to consider

- 1) consultation – what would good consultation look like?
- 2) Gaps – what gaps in service and knowledge exist in the community?
- 3) Funding – what are the recommendations and what would they entail? Does it include training? Education? Service improvement?

In my view, this debate is an opportunity for Windsor, and the Diversity Committee in particular, to take stock of services in Windsor and to recommend policy change that would support people in more fully availing themselves of services, for the city to be able

to advocate to the province and federal government for funding, and for people to feel safer reporting crime that occurs in our neighbourhoods.

In short, whatever we call a policy – “sanctuary city”, “access without fear”, or “welcoming community”, what is MORE important is the actual policy behind it. What might a “Made in Windsor” solution include?

History

Most of you probably know this, but I wanted to clarify how we got here and where our work stands to date.

Although the idea of sanctuary in this region is not new (indeed, it dates back to slavery and the underground railroad in this region), I’ll focus on this recent iteration in Windsor.

A group of students, faculty members, lawyers and interested people drafted a memo regarding Windsor as a sanctuary city. Councillor Marra was interested in this issue and took it to Council where the issue was sent to the Social Policy and Planning Department (now Community Development and Health Services department) of the City of Windsor.

This department held a small consultation and produced a report for council dated August 16, 2017.

At the September 5, 2017 council meeting, the issue was sent to the Diversity Committee for further research and consultation.

As the report was going to council, there were some concerns expressed by community members that the consultation by the city was not necessarily fulsome (holistic). A group of people held another consultation where we further discussed the potential for Windsor as an access without fear municipality.

This group has been careful not to post about this issue on social media or to attract too much attention to the issue. If that would be useful, there is a large group of people interested in this issue and willing to work on meaningful policy. I am happy to connect you with this group if it would be useful.