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Newcomer Settlement and Inclusion in Peel: Building on Existing Assets

A Special Report on the Vision of a New Model for
Enhancing Newcomer Settlement Services in Peel

Funded by:



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United Way
of Peel Region

Region of Peel
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Our Vision:

The successful inclusion of newcomers into all aspects of the community, embracing everyone's contribution and ensuring well being for all.

Our Mission:

To champion a coordinated and collaborative strategy for the successful integration of newcomers in the economy and community of Peel.

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Message from the PNSG Co-Chairs and the Director

We would like to start by thanking our stakeholders and partners for your invaluable support and contribution in developing the vision of a new model for newcomer settlement and inclusion in Peel. With the development of this model, we have come a long way in our work of creating a vibrant, cohesive and welcoming community in Peel.

Peel Newcomer Strategy Group's new model is, indeed, a milestone in our efforts of creating opportunities for newcomers to maximize their potential in an environment that is fair and supportive.

The vision of this new model recommends the creation of a network of services that are centrally coordinated and delivered through community hubs combined with services from flexible and specialized agencies. The focus is to build on existing assets and utilize all our specialized expertise.

Working as gateways for newcomer related services, community hubs will engage specific neighbourhoods and communities in ongoing dialogues to assess local needs and subsequently deliver a broad range of services in most accessible and appropriate ways possible.

The impact of this new model's vision will be far-reaching and transformative in meeting the needs of our newcomers. Indeed, this is what we were asked for during our community visioning and planning session co-sponsored by United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel in 2006.

Since PNSG's official launch in January 2008 with funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, we have intensely followed our community vision and gone through a comprehensive process of community consultation, research and analysis to form a solid grounding of our work. Many of you have contributed in this process.

We have received overwhelming response from our stakeholders – immigrants, non-profit and settlement services organizations, community and faith based organizations, educational institutions, businesses, Boards of Trade, policy-makers, government officials and funders – during the process of development of this new model.

Our task now is to work collaboratively in translating the proposed model's vision into reality. It is imperative that we act to ensure the economic and social prosperity of our Peel community which, according to 2006 census, consists of 49% immigrants.

We believe, we have to develop holistic programs that address all aspects of our community life -- from the economic to the civic and socio-cultural -- to create sustainable solutions to newcomer settlement and integration. We have to envision newcomer integration, inclusion and social cohesion within the broad framework of community and nation building endeavour.

Our journey ahead needs continued collaborative efforts from all of us. We must all come together to create an inclusive society that embraces everyone's contribution and ensures well-being for all. With your support and contribution, Peel may potentially be a trend-setter in newcomer settlement and inclusion practices in Canada and beyond.

We look forward to working with you in the days to come.

Shelley White
PNSG Co-Chair &
CEO of United Way of Peel Region

Janet Menard
PNSG Co-Chair &
Commissioner of Human Services,
Regional Municipality of Peel

Sathya Gnaniah
PNSG Director

Newcomer Settlement and Inclusion in Peel: Building on Existing Assets

Overview of the vision of a new model

After two years of research, consultation and analysis, Peel Newcomer Strategy Group has developed the vision of a new model for the newcomer settlement and inclusion in Peel. This new model recommends creation of a network of services that are centrally coordinated and delivered through community hubs, combined with flexible roving newcomer services from specialized agencies.

In most cases, community hubs will offer a full-suite of newcomer services, connecting residents to a broad range of services. Services would be tailored to the most common local needs by engaging the community in ongoing community development efforts. The hubs will function as primary gateways of services for newcomers.

Community hubs will offer a broad range of services tailored to the most common needs of the local community.

Other service-providers would deliver their services on a non-geographic basis. Working both independently and in partnership with hubs, these flexible service-providers would focus on particular needs and areas of expertise, addressing, for example, newcomer seniors' issues, specific needs of geographically dispersed ethno-cultural groups such as the Vietnamese community and addressing specific policy areas requiring expertise, such as women abuse.

The new model supports a move to case management as the most effective tool for supporting newcomers through the complex array of services and the supports they need.

A central coordinating body will link hubs to ensure strong cross-sectoral cooperation, effective sector-wide research and planning. It would develop shared protocols to facilitate a "no wrong door" model of service delivery. It would also support funding prioritization by engaging funders with service-providers, governments and institutions. It would support effective employment strategies by helping to better link the sector with employers. The coordination will also provide venues for smaller service-providers, newcomers and other stakeholders to play an ongoing role in planning and shaping the development of policies, infrastructure and services.

How we arrived at the model: our process

In 2006, United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel co-sponsored an immigration visioning and planning session to explore possible directions to address the community's concerns and needs related to the delivery of services to immigrants. The participants of the visioning session overwhelmingly supported the creation of a comprehensive community strategy to enhance the successful settlement and inclusion of growing number of newcomers to Peel.

In 2007, United Way of Peel Region received funding from the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada to develop a community-wide strategy for newcomer settlement and inclusion in Peel. As a result, Peel Newcomer Strategy Group (PNSG) was officially launched in January 2008 to conduct extensive research and consultations to develop a new coordinated model for enhancing the settlement sector services in Peel. The vision of the new model is derived from research carried out in three stages: literature review, community consultations, and one-on-one consultations with the settlement sector agencies.

PNSG has drawn on a number of initiatives including the Region of Peel's five discussion papers on immigration, the Peel Immigration Web Portal, the Peel Labour Market Survey, research carried out by the Social Planning Council of Peel, and the works of Mississauga Summit and Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC).

As part of the research, PNSG developed and released a report in November 2008 entitled, *Peel Community Report: A Profile of the Peel Community*. The report studied and identified key demographic factors of the Peel population including income, diversity, education, employment, language and poverty. The report also identified neighbourhoods with immigrant concentrations as well as immigration trends in the region.

The community consultations were conducted with more than 200 stakeholders including new immigrants, employers, service providers, funders and community partners. During the consultations, the stakeholders identified possible strategies that may enhance the process of settlement and integration of newcomers in Peel.

All the research, consultations and analysis consistently pointed out to the need for a more coordinated, engaged and responsive settlement and inclusion mechanism for our community.

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Highlights of our findings

The research and community consultations indicated that newcomers face a range of barriers in the process of settlement and integration and that the service infrastructure in Peel and across Canada does not fully address those challenges. Unaddressed newcomer settlement and integration issues by the existing service infrastructure have an adverse impact on settlement outcomes in various areas including employment, poverty, social inclusion, housing and health.

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The findings in the research were validated by the consultations. Some of the key findings include:

Accessible client-centred service challenges: Access to services is a challenge for newcomers. Newcomers often cannot identify access points. Services are fragmented, sometimes, hard to locate and often hard to navigate. Information about services is often hard to access, even for service-providers. Connections between services are not often resourced and consequently are less common than would be preferable. Services are not always located where they are needed.

Many newcomers lack information about services, and information systems can be dated. There are also overlaps and gaps in service types and target communities. Even those who have accessed the system, navigability is poor. As a result, newcomers often fall out of the system, rather than making transition to the next appropriate services.

Newcomers don't know where to go. Services are not always located in places that are physically accessible; often far from the neighbourhoods where newcomers live. Services are geographically scattered and structurally fragmented. These circumstances appear to relate—at least in part—to the funding mechanism which creates competition and diminishes coordination and cooperation.

Almost all service-providers recognize the need for more intensive, one-on-one services reflecting what newcomers' need and want. But the concern is that the current funding system favours quantity over quality,

discouraging more intensive programs. Skills development, training and capacity-building are growing but still lagging behind.

Lack of appropriate services: The linguistic and cultural appropriateness of services offered to newcomers is mixed. Services are not always linguistically or culturally accommodating. The format of services is often less than ideal. One-on-one, face-to-face support is the most effective, but is rarely provided. Services often fail to reflect the full range of services needed for newcomers. Language, acculturation and employment programs tend to be more basic and less well-attuned to current needs. Program content needs to change as well as format and setting.

Rise of ethno-specific and faith-based services: Lack of appropriate services in the current infrastructure has contributed to the emergence of newer informal services catered to geographically disperse ethno-cultural groups. Some of these informal groups that include faith-based organizations and cultural entities provide services on a large scale. These are troubling outcomes as the effectiveness of informal networks and ethno-specific service capacity varies across cultural and linguistic groups. The adequacy and currency of information in informal sector is uneven. The informal option is most beneficial if it is connected to formal supports.

Focus on community engagement: Services work especially well when they are grounded in the community. A community development approach enhances settlement and integration outcomes. The receptivity of the host community is also important to success.

Challenges in initial engagement: Early settlement and engagement of newcomers are hampered by a range of systemic barriers. Initial contacts with service-providers are often unsuitable to the needs of immigrants who have just arrived in a new country. Materials are often linguistically inaccessible. They are often complex and less relevant than desirable. There are too few opportunities to access information on an as-needed basis. The focus on one-time support and written material does not reflect newcomers' preferred modes of interaction. Outreach is not extensive and frequent.

Co-ordination and effective settlement system: Coherent and coordinated planning of services, based on consistent data-gathering, is required for effective settlement system. More coordination among funders would assist this process. A common intake, assessment and referral approach could improve navigation and integration of services and would enable service-providers to offer a "no wrong door" approach by steering newcomers to the services they need from any point of



contact. Mainstream services that are not primarily dedicated to newcomers should be connected to this intake and referral system, as should informal service-providers.

Strengthening employment services: Despite innovative work done by TRIEC, the Boards of Trade and others in the employment service-sector, employment services are not meeting needs. Services are too basic and too narrow for the recent newcomers, especially those who are highly educated. Employers are not well engaged by the system. The business case for employing newcomers should be better documented and disseminated.

Challenges in building collaboration and partnership: There is recognition that more coordinated efforts are needed to build collaborations and partnerships. But there is also recognition that current structures stand on the way to collaboration and coordination. There are concerns that current funding structures promote competition and do not resource collaboration. Smaller organizations, in particular, do not have resources available for partnerships, collaboration or extensive participation in joint ventures.

Development and implementation of the new model should take place in consultations with the sector to ensure that the model utilizes existing assets.

Building on existing assets: Smaller organizations provide valuable services; especially to specific sub-groups such as language and age groups. Some of these organizations have valuable areas of specialization: such as women abuse. These assets should not be overlooked. Development and implementation of the new model should take place in ongoing consultations with the sector to ensure that the new model utilizes existing assets. Staff turnover is high and there are too few advancement opportunities, especially in smaller organizations, resulting in lost skills.

Community hubs a useful component: Community hubs can be a useful component of a new service-delivery model for newcomers. Hubs are valuable but they need to be in settings where all partners can work in equitable and collaborative partnerships. Hubs demand effective internal management capacity to cope with the volume of work and scope of partnerships. Hubs require robust, reliable and transparent governance structures to ensure accountability and responsiveness. Hubs need to address special needs and embrace the full cultural and linguistic diversity of their communities.

Guiding principles:

PNSG's research and community consultations led to the adoptions of four principles to guide the development and implementation of the new model. The principles are:

1. Strengthening service coordination and planning across the region
2. Ensuring accessible, client-centered services for all newcomers
3. Creating a continuum of effective employment strategies
4. Enhancing the receptivity of the host community

The new model: key elements

- Community hubs
- Existing diverse and specialized services
- No wrong door approach
- Central planning table
- Employment and career development
- New product development
- Case management system

Community hubs

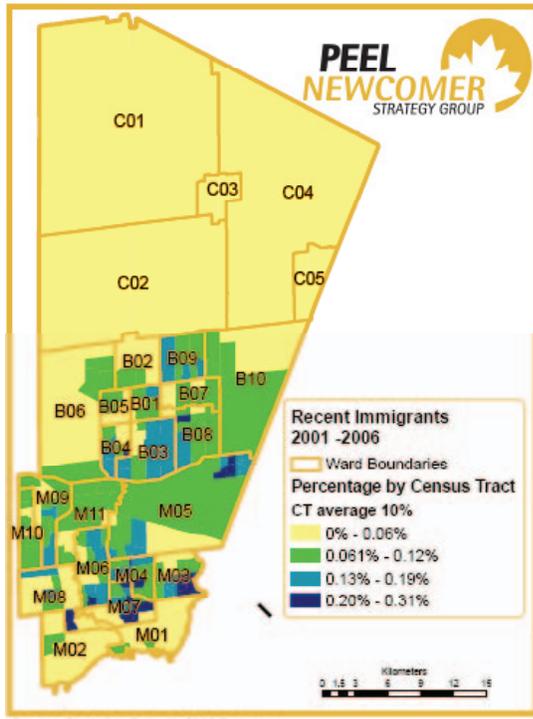
Community hubs are designed to be the first point of contact for settlement services for newcomers after their arrival in our community. Community hubs will make a broad range of services available to specific neighbourhoods in the most accessible and appropriate way possible. Hubs are not only service centres but also centres of community engagement.

Demographic data has identified geographic areas with high concentration of recent immigrants as "priority neighbourhoods" for settlement and integration services. Each of these priority neighbourhoods will have a community hub: highly visible, widely promoted and function as welcome centres to provide an accessible gateway to the service infrastructure for all newcomers.

Wherever possible, community hubs will be co-located with other service-providers to create an easy-to-navigate gateway to a full range of settlement and integration services. New immigrants to Peel will be provided with a map of Peel detailing the location and contact information of the community hubs. A one-on-one, intake assessment and referral will take place at the hub to start an immigrant's journey to Canada.



Community hubs will be anchored by multi-service agencies. These agencies will be required to develop service plans that will include an assessment of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the community as well as an assessment of the supports and programs needed. The hub anchor will seek agreements with other existing service-providers



to meet the service needs of the residents or, where no appropriate services are available, develop new services to meet identified needs. The hub anchor will offer space to other service-providers to deliver needed services either on a permanent basis or intermittently.

Hub anchors will be expected to carry out community engagement and community development activities as part of their programming. The aim of these activities is to create a strong community bond and a deeper understanding about the dynamics and needs of the particular community.

Community engagement should also support the inherent strengths of the local community and facilitate linking newcomers to appropriate services through informal relationships and social networks. Hub anchors will also play a leadership role in actively developing relationships with informal service-providers and enhancing their capacity to enable them serving their constituents.

Hub anchors will work with mainstream service-providers to support them in developing their capacity to provide effective services to newcomers. Anchors will provide information on appropriate and available referrals for specific needs. They will also provide information related to cultural accommodations that may be needed by clients of the mainstream service agencies.

Hubs anchors will be selected through a transparent, criteria-driven process. Selection will be based on proponent organizations' programming strength, governance structure, ability to drive successful partnerships and its relationship with the community.

The anchors will also draw support from groups such as the proposed Mississauga Council for Diversity and Inclusion (MCDI) that is evolving through the Mississauga Summit to engage the local communities.

The hub approach complements the creation of full-suite Employment Ontario by providing comprehensive services in single sites. This approach also works effectively with Citizenship and Immigration Canada's modernization initiative by breaking down silos and providing coordination for a variety of federally funded settlement services.

The map shown indicates the established neighbourhoods in Peel and provide a basis for identifying appropriate hub communities. Efforts should be made to coordinate the location of hubs with existing service infrastructure including schools, libraries and assessment centres.

Correlating the concentrations of newcomers with the established neighbourhoods in Peel, community hubs locations may include Springdale (Brampton), Bramalea (Brampton), Central Brampton, Meadowvale (Mississauga), Malton (Mississauga), Clarkson/Erin Mills (Mississauga), Cooksville/City Centre (Mississauga), Streetsville (Mississauga), and Dixie Bloor (Mississauga).

Ongoing immigration trends suggest a hub in Caledon may also be established. A hub may also be considered near Heart Lake and the Castlemore/ Clairville (Brampton) in future.

Existing diverse and specialized services

The research and consultations reinforce the fact that no single agency can successfully meet the full-range of needs of our newcomers. As a result, the services of diverse range of existing mainstream and specialized ethno-specific agencies are an integral part of the new model. For example, specialized ethno-specific settlement services may be the best vehicle to address the needs of an ethno-cultural group that is not concentrated in any particular neighbourhood.

Some demographic groups, such as seniors, have specific needs that may be difficult for hubs to meet on an ongoing basis. The seniors' group, for example, may benefit from the intermittent provision of services at the hub by a senior-specific agency.

Some service needs require specialized skills, for example, women abuse and those services may best be delivered on an itinerant basis at the hub by a specialized service-provider.

The services of diverse range of existing mainstream and specialized ethno-specific agencies are an integral part of the new model.

No wrong door approach

Research shows, newcomers frequently fall through the cracks, failing to access appropriate services, falling out of the system too easily and having difficulty navigating service programs. A "no wrong door" approach, that ensures entry of newcomers at any point of the service system and connects them to the whole system, will help overcome that problem. Harmonized intake assessment and referral tools need to be in place to enable service-providers to get access to necessary up-to-date information about newcomers.

Under no wrong door approach, informal service-providers such as socio-cultural groups and faith-based organizations as well as social networks of families and friends can also play a stronger role. Provided these groups have accurate information and necessary training, they can successfully work as initial service contact points. While they can continue to deliver the supports they are suited to provide, they can

also connect newcomers to other services that go beyond their means and mandates.

Central planning table

While community hub and “no wrong door” model provide a network of well-structured neighbourhood-based needs and asset assessment and response systems, the region as a whole also requires a coherent mechanism for assessing overall capacity and effectiveness of services to address newcomer needs efficiently. This includes: needs assessment and planning for geographic areas that are not covered by community hubs; and specialized services for specific groups.

The mandate of the central planning table includes:

- Gathering and analyzing regional data on settlement and integration outcomes to determine the overall success of the settlement and integration efforts,
- Assessing emerging service needs and gaps based on ongoing analysis of data
- Reviewing the service plans of the community hubs and assessing the effectiveness of key elements such as outreach, service design, governance, and transparency to ensure that local hubs are meeting their objectives as part of a region-wide settlement system
- Overseeing the operation of a coordinated liaison with employers
- Facilitating region-wide outreach and supporting the coordination of a no-wrong door model, including connecting to informal and faith-based groups
- Engaging the broader settlement sector in the review of progress on settlement and integration
- Ongoing implementation of the new model and making amendments as needed
- Developing or facilitating the capacity-building and training processes necessary to support agencies in effective response to newcomer needs and successful participation in the new model

The central planning table should consist of key decision-makers from various organizations who can address policy changes in the sector. The membership should include the executive directors of the hub anchors, major funders [including Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC); Ontario’s Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI); Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU); and United Way], major institutions including the Region of Peel, the municipalities, the school boards, and other relevant stakeholders such as TRIEC and the Boards of Trade.

To ensure that the central planning table is well-informed about the

challenges that newcomers face, it would regularly consult with existing service-provider networks such as Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). The central table will create opportunities for all service-providers to meet regularly at a Settlement Services Network Table to discuss settlement challenges and opportunities among themselves. The central table will also include direct representation from settlement service-providers’ network.

The central planning table would operate with the help of more narrowly focused specialized committees that would provide recommendations for the central table for considerations. Specialized committee membership would be drawn from among the central planning table members and other relevant stakeholders.

Smaller organizations and newcomers themselves would not generally be able to participate in intensive regular meetings but will make significant contribution to policy development and system evaluation. To ensure input from smaller organizations, the central planning table will also host annual forums to engage them in review of needs, priorities and implementation of the model in Peel.

Successful pilot programs such as mentoring, internship and host program have demonstrated their value and these should be replicated on a larger scale.

Employment and career development

Newcomers find that employment services, though delivered by concerned and dedicated organizations and staff, do not reliably translate into appropriate employment. Program content tends to focus (sometimes repetitively) on basic skills such as resume writing and tends to offer supports that can be provided in a large volume, with few one-on-one intensive supports available. This generic approach is seen as unlikely to succeed.

More emphasis on advanced employment skills, such as networking and career building, is needed. Newcomers want assistance in obtaining certification of their foreign credentials. There is consensus that successful pilot programs such as mentoring, internship and host program have demonstrated their value and these should be replicated on a larger scale.

Programs to enhance retention and career advancement after initial employment are a desirable component of a comprehensive service mix. Access to paid opportunities to obtain “Canadian experience” and better access to financial supports for training and certification are also strongly encouraged by newcomers and service-providers.

Finally, employment systems need to create better connections to employers. A service-body or entity that reaches out to employers providing a pool of well-trained and qualified job-ready newcomers is generally recognized as a significant need. This body would have to reach out to serve employers articulating a business case for employing newcomers. Such an entity would also need to offer a marketable “brand” that is recognized by employers as a reputable alternative to the private sector recruitment and hiring practices. TRIEC and the Boards of Trade have expressed interest in playing a role in creating and supporting such an entity and they should be engaged in its development.



New product development

Consultations and research demonstrated need for changes to the services. While the most consistent concerns are related to accessibility and navigability of the service system, concerns about the content of services are also significant.

Language skills: While existing language programs are effective at providing basic conversational English competency, it is no longer sufficient for higher level professional language proficiency, especially, for many recent newcomers with higher professional expectations. More tailor made language training programs with a focus on professional employment -- such as Enhanced Language Training Program funded by the Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Specialized Language Training Pilot Projects funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration -- are needed to meet the high level language needs of newcomers.

Acculturation and systems navigation: Newcomers indicate consistent needs for education about Canadian ways of doing things, especially issues related to customs, expectations, systems and laws.

While many of these needs relate to navigating the culture, others relate to basic needs, for example, understanding the segmentation of the retail system is a matter of familiarity rather than logic. Information related to acculturation and navigation may be built in the LINC curriculum and other settlement and orientation settings.

A case management model would ensure that newcomers would have access to a support-worker who would, on an ongoing basis, identify appropriate settlement and integration services at various stages of the process.

Case management system

The challenges newcomers face in navigating settlement services would be immensely improved with the establishment of ongoing supports in the form of case management services.

A case management model would ensure that at their first intake and assessment, newcomers would be provided with a support-worker who would, on an ongoing basis, identify appropriate settlement and integration services at various stages of the process. Newcomers would work with their respective case managers to identify challenges, determine short, medium and long-term objectives. The case manager would assist in determining supports and interventions most likely to facilitate newcomer's efforts to reach those objectives.

With a newcomer population of 100,000 in Peel, the implementation of case management model will have a significant impact on staffing. However, coordinating case management for newcomers with other case management systems administered by the public sector, such as employment and social assistance, could minimize the costs and make this model an economically attractive option. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and other settlement sector organizations such as the Welcome Centre partnership in York Region have also explored effective and viable case management models.

Next steps

The implementation of this new model calls for significant changes in the way services are delivered to newcomers in Peel. Indeed, the implementation process will require a carefully planned transition, overseen by PNSG and ultimately by the central planning table with active engagement from key stakeholders.

Working Groups: PNSG is currently convening working groups -- composed of participants who are well informed about the settlement infrastructure, relevant policies and processes -- to map out transition and implementation strategies. Working groups have been proposed in the following thematic areas:

1. Community Hub Development
2. Employer Engagement
3. Intake, Assessment and Referral System/Case Management System
4. Informal Services Network
5. Host Community Receptivity
6. Investment and Funding
7. Communication and Community Engagement Plan

The purpose of these working groups is to come-up with specific implementable action plans in each of the above outlined areas. The members in the working groups will work as engines of innovative ideas and plans. The working groups will submit their recommendations to the PNSG steering committee.

Inter-governmental engagements: Currently, PNSG is meeting with senior government officials from different government departments. The objectives of these engagements are to present and discuss with them the portrait of immigration in Peel and our vision of a model to support the settlement and inclusion of new immigrants to the region. These engagements are also to confirm that PNSG's vision of the new model aligns with the vision of the federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments. The meetings also provide PNSG an opportunity to seek inputs from all levels of the government which is crucial to the implementation of the model.

Community presentation: PNSG will present the vision of the new model to the larger community of stakeholders at a forum on June 16, 2010 from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Mississauga Convention Centre. The purpose of the presentation is to share the new model with the community and seek their continued support to work collaboratively in translating the proposed model's vision into reality.

Funding for implementation: Mobilizing financial resources for the work will be the key in delivering the promises of the model. In the days ahead, PNSG will be presenting specific implementation plans developed by the working groups to the public and private funders and seek funding support to implement the vision of the new model.

A full report of this new model is available at PNSG website: www.peelnewcomer.org. The full report was prepared by Public Interest Strategy and Communications.