

August 14th, 2007

Please accept this report on the “state of City” as it relates to Maple Leaf Food’s request to bring additional foreign workers to Brandon. As with updates of this nature it is impossible to capture all the efforts underway in Brandon to aid in the successful integration and retention of foreign workers, immigrants and their family members. The information shared is therefore just a snapshot of efforts underway and is considered to be accurate to the best of my knowledge at the time of preparing this report.

The City of Brandon continues to work very closely with Maple Leaf Food’s employees to ensure the community is well prepared for the arrival of family members of foreign workers who have received landed immigrant status and additional foreign workers. In 2006 and early 2007, the Economic Development office in partnership with Maple Leaf Foods - Brandon, reached out to approximately 40 community stakeholder organizations to establish a communication database, to discuss the successes and challenges associated with Maple Leaf Food’s first shift operations and projections for the 2nd shift expansion. The communication database is managed by the City of Brandon and updates and information relevant to 2nd shift expansion are distributed to a database of approximately 120 stakeholder organizations on a quarterly basis or more frequently if deemed appropriate. The community stakeholder meetings were used to open the lines of communication and use the information gleaned from the meetings to identify and address challenges in the community relating to first shift operations, and proactively seek solutions and plan for the addition of a second shift at the Brandon plant.

At the conclusion of the community consultations, working teams led by at least two Maple Leaf employees were established to ensure continued community dialogue in the areas of housing, daycare, transportation, education/language/settlement, and health. These working teams continue to work proactively with community stakeholders to ensure as smooth a transition to full second shift operations as possible. Monthly meetings of the working teams are held with the City of Brandon as an active participant.

Senior representatives from Maple Leaf Foods and the City of Brandon meet regularly to ensure strategic directions are understood and big picture planning is occurring in a coordinated fashion.

Housing:

The rental housing market has remained tight for many years, with developers consistently building to meet demand. New units constructed continue to be consumed as quickly as they are developed, and the rental vacancy rate for the past five years has continued to decline despite the addition of 648 new multi family units. 3+ bedroom rental units are in very short supply and it is anticipated that the arrival of family members of foreign workers who have now attained landed immigrant status will cause significantly more pressure in this sector of the rental market as well as the need for entry level single family units. Single-family units constructed and MLS® sales have been steady and strong and average selling prices continue to climb, all indicative of a tight housing market. Historical rental vacancy rates and new dwellings constructed appear below. Maple Leaf has demonstrated an ability to secure rental units within the market place in advance of foreign worker arrivals. This success has resulted in continued pressure in the rental market for existing and new residents and the City is working with our post secondary institutions to monitor the impact the housing situation will have on

student's ability to secure accommodations while in Brandon for post secondary studies. In response to a growing economy and the need for additional housing the following steps have been undertaken.

- An affordable housing plan was developed and adopted by City Council in April 2007 confirming the priority City Council has placed on increasing the availability of affordable housing stock in Brandon. This plan includes a variety of recommendations aimed at increasing the overall availability of affordable housing in Brandon. As a result of the affordable housing plan the City of Brandon has allocated \$100,000 in grants for the development of affordable housing in 2007 and has budgeted to increase this figure to \$250,000 in 2008. The report can be viewed online at www.econdev.brandon.ca in the reports section.
- Meetings have been conducted with local housing developers to ensure they understand the current housing supply and demand projections and have the information they require to make development decisions.
- The Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation has received confirmation of funding in the amount of \$500,000 spread over two years for the development of affordable housing. A call for proposals was distributed and publicly advertised in August 2007.
- Discussions are underway with the Province of Manitoba regarding moving underutilized Manitoba Housing Authority rental units located elsewhere in Manitoba to Brandon as well as the construction of additional rental units.
- By-laws have been implemented that offer incentives for the development of new affordable housing rental units and for the upgrade of existing single family homes owned by low income earners.
- A housing supply and demand analysis related to the 2nd shift expansion at Maple Leaf Foods in Brandon was completed by the City of Brandon and shared publicly.
- The City of Brandon has committed to completing an annual housing supply and demand analysis to ensure the information required to motivate the construction of new multiple family and single family housing is readily available.
- Efforts are underway to develop concept plans that incorporate affordable housing for municipally owned land.
- An online rental availability directory has been developed by the City of Brandon and is free to landlords who wish to list rental properties and residents searching for accommodations. The directory is updated continuously and can be found at www.brandon.ca/rental. The number of listings fluctuates, reflective of a changing rental market. At the time of finalizing this report, there were 11 rental units listed as available.
- The City of Brandon is monitoring rental classifieds that appear in the daily newspaper. Historical data has been compiled for the period of January 1st, 2006 to present. At the time of finalizing this report, there were 11 rentals listed in the Brandon Sun classified section. These listings were different than those that appeared in the online availability directory.
- Brandon University traditionally has a significant number of rooms available in their on campus dormitory. This year more dormitory rooms are being rented but at time of issuing this letter there were still double room vacancies in two of the University's residences.
- Brandon University has made the necessary plans / furniture purchases to ensure they are able to rent all available dorm rooms to students.
- Permits for approximately 90 new multiple family dwellings have been taken out in 2007.
- The local community college is investigating the viability of building rental units on their new complex. Should this prove to be a viable project, the earliest the units would be ready is 2009.

- The Brandon Homelessness Committee received Federal funding for homelessness projects. The committee identified the creation of new units as a priority for the allocation of available funds. A call for proposals was completed and the preliminary evaluation conducted. Most of the projects that were given the go ahead to move from the expression of interest stage to full proposal development also include an element of affordable housing.
- Several out of province developers have been monitoring the housing situation in Brandon and are contemplating multiple family units that range from small 6 plexes to large units with close to 100 rentals.

New Dwelling Units, 1997 – 2006

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total 97-06
Single Family	83	121	48	70	60	124	150	228	170	155	1209
Two Family	8	34	8	4	6	4	4	0	8	6	82
Multiple Family	36	23	250	26	45	111	165	63	76	233	1028
Totals	127	178	306	100	111	239	319	291	254	394	2319

Apartment Vacancy (%)	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Bachelor	3.9	7.3	1	2.4	2.4	1.1	0.0	0.0
1 Bedroom	2.5	1.8	0.8	1.8	1.3	0.9	1.1	1.4
2 Bedroom	1.4	1.3	0.6	0.9	1	1.1	0.9	0.6
3 Bedroom +	0	2.1	**	**	**	**	0.0	0.0
Total	1.8	1.7	0.6	1.3	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.9

Year	Number of MLS® Residential Sales	Year	Number of MLS® Residential Sales
2006	1096	2000	813
2005	1056	1999	791
2004	948	1998	744
2003	878	1997	772
2002	836	1996	721
2001	875	1995	605

While the housing market continues to experience significant pressure in both the rental and starter home markets the community has not reached the point in which accommodations are simply not available, rather the challenge is finding suitable accommodations within a price range that is manageable for tenants. The housing situation is changing so rapidly with Maple Leaf Foods 2nd shift expansion, Wyeth Organics expansion, the addition of Shape Foods and other incidental economic growth that the situation must be monitored at frequent intervals. Local developers have a track record of building units just in time, and there is nothing to indicate that this trend won't continue in the future.

Daycare:

There has been an ongoing daycare shortage in Brandon for many years and a definite lack of evening, weekend and extend hour daycare services. Most daycares have waiting lists. The local daycare office has been very proactive in ensuring that Brandon's needs are well known at a Provincial level and they are extremely helpful and quick to respond to organizations that choose to develop daycares in the City of Brandon. In the past four months, the City has been approached by three different organizations that are in the consideration stage of developing daycares. No formal applications to this end have been received.

Historically, the bulk of childcare in Brandon and surrounding area is home-based (both licensed and non-licensed). This segment of the daycare sector continues to grow and there has been interest expressed by some of the new immigrants who have joined the community to establish home daycares.

Maple Leaf's daycare team continues to explore options to support daycare services in Brandon. They have completed in-depth research on daycare models, employee needs and current daycare capacity and are evaluating playing a lead role in the development of daycares in Brandon.

Language:

Access to local volunteer translators remains a challenge, as does a model in which to pay for translation services. Efforts to remedy this include the following:

- The Immigrant Network Coordinating Committee has been established in partnership with Manitoba Labour & Immigration, Westman Immigrant Services and community volunteers. The Committee's top two priorities are language / translation and English as a Second Language. A working committee has been established for language / translation and they are working on two projects, one that meets immediate needs and another that is a long term project. The immediate needs project involves the establishment of a language bank of volunteers, a training program for these volunteers and a means in which to allow those requiring translations services to access the bank of volunteers. The long-term project will involve many stakeholders, dedicated human and financial resources and will result in a translation bank with clearly defined usage parameters, funding model and paid translation services available in multiple languages.
- Westman Immigrant Services has hired two bilingual settlement workers (one speaks Spanish and the other speaks Amharic) and is assessing the need to hire a Chinese settlement worker.
- Local businesses and service providers are hiring employees that reflect the community demographics. This ranges from hospitality business, to professional services and government organizations. The community has realized that our community demographic has changed and so too much their planning and staffing. Some businesses are also paying to train their current staff in multiple languages and bring in translated materials that exist within their parent organizations. While progress is being made, there remains much to do in this regard.

- Government and public sector organizations continue to access CanTalk a phone translation service but actual implementation of language solutions seems slower than private industry and community based organizations.
- 911 has access to phone translation.
- Maple Leaf continues to build the language capacity within its employee base. Many of the Maple Leaf employees also volunteer their time to assist those with limited language capabilities.
- The various ethnic groups found throughout Brandon continue to self organize and build language / settlement capacity amongst themselves.
- Partnerships continue to be developed amongst government, service providers and Maple Leaf to enable the sharing of translated materials.

Understanding who offers formal and informal language classes in the City of Brandon has been identified as a challenge within the community. To meet this need the Immigrant Services Network Committee has developed an EAL working Committee. This committee has developed an inventory of informal and formal language classes / programs that will be formatted for public distribution. This inventory will then be used by immigrants, service providers and businesses to gain an understanding of what is available for language programs and who is eligible to access which programs. The committee is also working on developing a visual map that captures an immigrant learner's journey. With these two pieces of information prepared, the committee intends to undertake a service delivery educational process that will explain to service providers what is available for language classes, the questions to ask immigrants to gauge their needs, the first step in navigating the EAL map from an immigrant's perspective and the importance of service providers directing immigrants to the right step in the EAL map rather than inviting them into their own programs. The committee is trying to develop a community in which the needs of the immigrant come first.

Overall the language barriers that exist within the community are by far the most far reaching and present one of the greatest challenges to community and immigrant success. If the projects referenced above are successful and organizations commit to changing how they plan their budgets and resources, significant progress can be expected. That said, language is an area requiring a great deal of attention and resources.

Transportation:

Maple Leaf continues to work very closely with the City of Brandon with regards to public transportation needs for their employees and their family members. Preplanning has ensured that current schedules and buses are able to handle the increasing capacity as foreign workers arrive. There continues to be a great deal of capacity within the regular transit routes, so absorbing the increased usage by family members of foreign workers does not pose a challenge.

The City of Brandon has also increased the hours of operation for their transit system so that city transportation now runs till midnight Monday - Saturday, making evening transportation easier.

The Brandon Police Service continues to work with foreign workers regarding bicycling rules, safety and security. Maple Leaf has made reflective vests available to employees who cycle to and from work.

Overall, the transportation segment of the community seems well prepared to meet current and projected demands for service, with exception being the fact that there is no Sunday bus service. The lack of Sunday bus service makes it difficult for immigrants who work to make it to and from work in a cost effective manner.

Settlement Services:

Westman Immigrant Services (WIS) continues to be the primary settlement office for immigrants. The Province of Manitoba has increased the hours of work for settlement workers to keep pace with growing demand. WIS also continues to monitor the changing community demographics and hire staff that is able to offer language assistance for their clients.

Community organizations and service providers continue to monitor their clientele demographics and develop relevant programs as required. Securing adequate funding to allow an effective response to the significant amount of extra time that must go into delivering programming for those with limited English language capabilities remains a struggle. It is hoped that through the provision of statistics and projections regarding the changing demographics and community needs, this process will become easier over time.

Local organizations have organized a variety of programs aimed at improving the language functionality of immigrants and assisting them with community integration. Programs include an EAL summer camp for you under the age of 12, conversation groups, family support groups, settlement partner programs and a Canadian cooking class.

An Immigrant Services Resource guide has been developed that explains the different type of immigrant arrival streams, associated service delivery entitlements and a list of organizations in the community that offer immigrant specific services. The guide is being printed and will be distributed in early September.

Free immigrant orientation sessions have been developed. The sessions are a four part series that address the typical areas of interest/need for newcomers. The sessions will continue to be offered and evolve over time.

Maple Leaf has shared their foreign worker orientation package with stakeholders so that service providers are able to review it for gaps and possibly offer complimentary orientation sessions or where appropriate work with Maple Leaf to enhance their orientation package.

Newcomer DVDs were developed and translated into seven languages. These videos have been shared with local service providers and are made available to immigrants as required.

Brandon School Division has partnered with Maple Leaf to offer school pre-registration /registration drives for immigrants at the Maple Leaf facility. This registration will ensure their children are registered for school and provide assistance in understanding the school enrolment process. The first pre-registration day was held on August 14th, 2007.

The Brandon Race Relations Committee continues to work on improving race relations in the City of Brandon. They are also exploring the possibility of hiring a coordinator for the network's efforts, to allow for year-round programming.

Many successful cultural events have been and are being organized in the City in an effort to build community and assist with the integration of immigrants.

Several Immigrant needs analysis's have been completed and shared with the community. This information is being used to proactively respond to the needs of immigrants.

As the community continues to grow the workload for settlement workers at Westman Immigrant Services continues to grow exponentially. The significant number of foreign workers that have received landed immigrant status in 2007 and opted to bring their families to Brandon has placed considerable strain on WIS's Spanish speaking settlement worker. The implementation of newcomer orientation sessions, and the development of a language bank will assist in reducing this strain but it is likely that resources will need to be increased within WIS to meet current and growing needs. The organization and the Province of Manitoba monitor demand closely and have proven to be extremely proactive in responding to changes.

Miscellaneous:

The City of Brandon is developing a Cultural Development Plan that will be presented to City Council in fall 2007. The Cultural Development Plan will establish the philosophy of culture for the City of Brandon as a corporation and to will provide cultural development opportunities within the City's operating structure.

New businesses including stores and restaurants have opened up as a result of the ethnic diversity now found in Brandon. This offers great quality of life additions for existing residents and immigrants and also provides employment opportunities for immigrants.

Our local accommodation industry is working with Manitoba Tourism Education Council to understand how to offer training aimed at allowing immigrants to work successfully within tourism related industries. The first exploratory meeting is scheduled for August 16th, 2007, with the City of Brandon and active participant in the discussions.

The Rural Development Institute has embarked on a project that intends to develop a set of assumptions to inform demographic projections for Brandon and Westman. Currently there are no formal population projections that exist for temporary foreign workers (TFW) and immigrants, so this project will assist in developing forward-looking plans and processes to better attract, support/integrate, and retain foreign workers. Furthermore, this project intends to develop documents that will provide information to stakeholders and other interested parties regarding demographic expectations for the area thus informing strategies for service provision and community support."

Overall the foreign workers brought in to work at the Maple Leaf plant and the family members that have begun to arrive, have settled into Brandon nicely. Housing, daycare and language / interpretation remain the greatest hurdles to overcome, before the community is able to truly reap all the benefits associated with the current growth and diversity being experienced.

Should you require additional information or clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at 204-729-2131 or via email at s.trudel@brandon.ca

Sincerely,



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