

Present:

Chair, Councillor Villeneuve
Vice Chair, Councillor LeFranc
S. Dooley
J. Parmar
K. Thiara
D. Toor
E. Milavic
L. Rhead
J. Sturge
M. Shaw
L. Coyle
K. Dhesa (YR)

Absent:

D. Chattha
J. Calbick
J. Liu (YR)

Staff Present:

A. Murphy, Senior Social Planner
M. McCargar, Planning Associate
L. Luaifoa, Legislative Services

A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. Social Policy Advisory Committee Minutes of December 3, 2014, to be approved.

It was

Moved by E. Milavic

Seconded by L. Rhead

That the Social Policy Advisory Committee

minutes of December 3, 2014 be adopted.

Carried

B. DELEGATIONS

1. **Lara Admad, President, Enactus SFU and Sean McKenna, Beedie School of Business, presented on the Enactus program**

The following comments were made:

- Enactus is a global organization aimed at developing student leaders who create positive impacts in their own communities through entrepreneurship. The mission of the program is to create opportunity for individuals by developing programs that address the economic, social and environmental needs of the community.
 - Students and faculty members collaborate with business leaders, industry professionals and community partners to improve the livelihoods of individuals all around the world.
-

- Enactus currently runs the following programs:
 - Axis Consulting
 - Banner Bags
 - Count on Me
 - Hunger Actions
 - Media Minds
 - SFU Entrepreneur of the Year
 - Soap for Hope
- The program audiences vary from low income families, student entrepreneurs, high school students, newcomers to Canada, non-profit organizations and youth at risk.
- The delegation highlighted the following 3 programs:
 1. **Hunger Actions**

A program for low-income families that teaches the basics of nutrition, budgeting, group cooking and home-energy savings, through a series of workshops.
 2. **Media Minds**

A digital literacy program for English Language Learner (ELL) students (ages 12-13) that helps them learn English in a creative way through videography.
 3. **Soap for Hope**

The newest program partners with the Union Mission Gospel in Vancouver's downtown eastside. It focuses on upcycling bar soaps from hotels and repurposing it into liquid soap to sell to local businesses. The goal is to perfect the creation process and then continue to work on how the soap will be distributed. SPAC members asked to be notified by Enactus once the soap is available for sale to consumers.
- Each year Enactus Canada hosts exhibitions to showcase programs and the impact that has been made during the year. Enactus SFU were Regional Champions in February, 2014 and National Semi-finalists in April, 2014.
- The President of Enactus SFU noted that the program is seeking new initiatives and new groups to work with. The goal is to set a strong base and focus on Surrey, developing on the presence the group has already established in the area. Enactus SFU currently has 98 members.

Councillor Villeneuve thanked the delegation for their presentation.

2. **Lali Pawa, Program Coordinator and Rick Craig, Executive Director, Justice Education Society presented on the Court Information Program for Immigrants.**

The following comments were provided:

- The Justice Education Society (JES) was established in 1989 and is mandated to build stronger communities by promoting understanding of, access to, and confidence in the justice system, at home and abroad.
- Some of the programs the society offers include:
 - Court Information Program for Immigrants
 - Justice Education System
 - Parenting After Separation Program
 - Northern Native Public Legal Education Program
- The JES offers numerous online resources. A few websites include:
 - SmallClaimsBC.ca
 - CourtsofBC.ca
 - VictimsInfo.ca
- The Court Information Program for Immigrants (CIPI) has been in operation for over 20 years providing legal information, education and referrals to victims, witnesses, accused or parties to a lawsuit. There are two CIPI offices which are located at the Vancouver Criminal Court and the Surrey Court.
- The program provides information and referrals in English, Chinese, Punjabi and Hindi and printed materials in 10 different languages.
- Court workers are available to help immigrants understand court documents and common legal terms, answer questions about what to expect in court, provide other sources of information such as referrals to community and government services/programs and assist with the Legal Aid application process.
- Court workers do not provide legal advice, serve as interpreters before the court nor advocate for clients.
- CIPI also provides free 90 minute workshops on the following topics; Canada's Justice System, Introduction to Family Justice Systems, Introduction to Criminal Justice Systems and Overview of Small Claims Court.
- The JES applied for funding for the CIPI to Citizenship and Immigration Canada and was denied on the basis that the program did not fit the funding criteria any longer.
- The delegation applied for \$10,000 in financial support from the City of Surrey Community Grants program to help the program continue. This financial support would assist 1,500 people directly. The City of Vancouver has funded the CIPI at the Vancouver Criminal Court for the past 13 years.
- The delegation noted that there is a great need for this valuable program in Surrey. The Surrey location assisted 1,500 people in 2014 and provided 30 community sessions.

The Committee made the following comments:

- The Community Grants program provides one time only grants. Applications are reviewed by a community committee and recommendations are made to Council.
- The City does not fund on-going operating funds. The Council Initiative Fund may consider applications where the grant would provide bridge funding. The Vice Chair commented that additional information about the program would be beneficial, such as what the funding being requested will be spent on and who the other funders are. The Vice Chair further noted that letters of support from organizations that the program supports would be useful. The delegation noted that as part of the proposal for the Community Grant application, letters of support were provided.
- The delegation noted that the JES has been meeting different agencies such as the Surrey RCMP to discuss innovative ways to work together. Staff noted that the City's Local Immigration Partnership has contracted SPARC BC to compile a community service inventory and conduct interviews with service providers. It was suggested that the delegation get on the list of organizations that will be surveyed.
- The Committee questioned if the JES has made any presentations to the local MP's to gain support for the program. The delegation replied that the MP's have been contacted as part of the process.
- The Committee recommended that the delegation explore the possibility of self-publishing its websites which could make some profit for the programs.
- Another option suggested for the delegation to consider is applying for funding outside of the province through the Law Foundation. Notaries are another resource for funding, from a crime prevention point of view.
- The delegation noted that the Surrey court house is expanding. If the CIPI services are unable to continue it will be a huge loss for the Surrey courts.

The delegation was thanked for their presentation.

3. Alison Clancey and Lisa Gibson, presented on the Living in Community (LIC) Initiative

The Committee viewed the following video: "LIVING IN COMMUNITY: Balancing Perspectives on Vancouver's Sex Industry (http://youtu.be/n_gYYJt4Saw). The following additional information was provided:

- The purpose of LIC is to create communities that are healthier and safer for each and every community member in relation to sex work and sexual exploitation.
- LIC is a unique initiative that brings together community organizations, sex workers, government, residents, businesses and the police, to address health and safety issues connected to sex work and sexual exploitation.

- LIC believes that the marginalization of sex workers and the displacement of sex workers from one neighbourhood to another only increases health and safety risks for all community members, including sex workers.
- In 2007, the LIC Steering Committee developed an action plan which included 27 recommendations. The Action Plan was updated in 2014 and includes links between the LIC Action Plan, Forsaken: the Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, and the City of Vancouver's Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Protecting Vulnerable Adults & Neighbourhoods Affected by Sex Work: A Comprehensive Approach and Action Plan; progress made on each recommendation; and the stakeholders responsible for each action. The update also served as a call to action for stakeholders to fulfill their responsibilities outlined in these three reports.

The following comments were made:

- The delegation is seeking interest in the Surrey community to engage with the LIC initiative. LIC is partnering with other communities in BC to adapt and expand the LIC model. Surrey was identified as a community that needs this type of work as it is a growing municipality.
- The delegation noted that, unlike the Vancouver Police Department, the Surrey RCMP do not have a vice unit. Apparently the Surrey RCMP are looking into funding for a sex worker liaison position.

The delegation was thanked for their presentation.

C. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

1. Alliance of Service Clubs

Discussion on the Website and Next Steps

- An email or letter will be sent out to Surrey's service clubs welcoming feedback on the web page that was created on the City of Surrey website. The message will also question if the groups are interested in staying involved. Once the message is sent out, Linda Coyle will follow-up with the groups and the Committee will discuss future steps at the April SPAC meeting.
- The Chair noted that contact should be made with the service clubs prior to organizing a Seeing is Believing tour due to the lack of participation with the first tour.
- Linda Coyle noted that one of the limitations with participation is due to the change of leadership/membership within the Service Clubs each year.

2. Social Policy Advisory Committee Meetings

Councillor Villeneuve, Councillor LeFranc and Aileen Murphy met to discuss the Committee and proposed that the Committee consider meeting on a quarterly basis. This structure would allow Committee members to focus on specific projects and report back to the Committee for dialogue on those projects and initiatives.

The Committee discussed the proposed change to the meeting schedule and felt it would benefit the Committee to meet every other month rather than quarterly. Members felt that meeting every other month with longer meetings would be the best model for the Committee.

3. Poverty Reduction

The Planning Associate provided the following update:

- The Poverty Reduction Forum is scheduled for February 16 at Kwantlen University with registration at 8:30 am. Councillor LeFranc and Steve Dooley will be the MC's.
- 60 out of 75 tickets have been sold.
- The forum is a professional development and networking event for people who are working in the field of poverty reduction and already aware of the issues.
- Donna Jean Forester-Gill of the Tamarack Institute, Ontario will facilitate a workshop-style conference and provide the keynote message.

4. Refugee Transportation Loan

721 signatures have been collected to date for the Refugee Transportation Loan petition. The goal is to gather 1000 signatures to present to the MP's prior to the election. The Committee was encouraged to continue with the petition and to forward the petitions by April.

D. NEW BUSINESS**1. 2015 SPAC Workplan**

- Steven Dooley and Councillor LeFranc are involved with the Social Innovation Summit in November 2015 and will update the Committee with details.
- A sub-committee was formed for initial discussions around the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. It consists of Lynne Rhead, Steven Dooley, Jodi Sturge and Councillor LeFranc. Michelle Shaw will attend the initial meeting. The next steps for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy will be updated in June.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

It was Moved by E. Milavic
Seconded by M. Shaw
That the Social Policy Advisory Committee
recommend that Council endorse the draft letter to be sent to the Members of
Parliament, requesting elimination of the Refugee Transportation Loan.
Carried

E. ITEMS REFERRED BY COUNCIL

There were no items referred by Council.

F. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence this meeting.

G. INFORMATION ITEMS

There were no information items.

H. OTHER BUSINESS**1. Committee Member Resignation and Terms**

The Chair noted that the terms for committee members Linda Coyle and Devinder Chattha have expired and Jeff Callbrick, United Way has resigned. Linda Coyle was present and thanked for her work on the Committee. The Chair also commended Jeff Callbrick and Devinder Chattha, who were not in attendance, for their contribution to the Committee.

2. 2015 SPAC Fun Schedule

- There are two delegations for the April meeting that will be presenting on the following: Housing First and the Hello Project.
- Signatures to be collected for the Refugee Transportation Loan petition in April
- The Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) update will take place at the June meeting.

3. Committee Member Updates

Lynne Rhead

SOS Children's Villages is a worldwide organization that works with children who have been abandoned or are orphans. SOS BC supports foster children and vulnerable children. When foster children are out of government care at age 19, they often find it difficult to live in society on their own. The SOS BC has 4 houses in Surrey for ages 16 to 24. The children have access to a variety of programs that assist them to learn to live on their own.

Linda Coyle

The UN has established the first week in February as World Interfaith Harmony week and the Surrey Interfaith Council is hosting an event at the Central City Library on February 7 from 1 to 4 pm.

Dale Toor

The Lion's Club will be hosting the Backpack program (food for children to take home to feed the family over the weekend) and the first school will be Old Yale Elementary School.

I. NEXT MEETING

The next Social Policy Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, April 1, 2015, at 4:45 p.m.**

J. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by E. Milavic

Seconded by M. Shaw

That the Social Policy Advisory Committee

meeting do now adjourn.

Carried

The Social Policy Advisory Committee adjourned at 7 p.m.

Jane Sullivan, City Clerk

Chairperson, Councillor J. Villeneuve
Social Policy Advisory Committee



the future lives here.

April 7, 2015

File: 5080-01

Dear Honourable (NAME):

Re: Transportation Loan Program for Government Assisted Refugees

The City of Surrey's Social Policy Advisory Committee is requesting that Surrey Members of Parliament urge the Government of Canada to terminate the requirement that Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) must repay their transportation and pre-entry medical expenses. We have a petition with over 1000 signatures and strongly believe this is an issue worth bringing to your attention.

Canada opens its doors to refugees as a humanitarian act. However, refugee families start their new life here with debt up to \$10,000 per family. Over the past decade, Surrey has emerged as a primary destination for GARs settling in BC. We see first-hand the negative impact that the repayment of the transportation loan has on the settlement of highly vulnerable refugee families.

Since 2009, the City of Surrey has been advocating for the termination of the refugee transportation loan program. Government Assisted Refugees represent less than 3% of new immigrants to this country. The total cost of their transportation and pre-entry medical costs is \$13 to \$15 million. Forgiving outstanding loans would cost about \$38 million annually - a negligible amount in Canada's federal budget.

The elimination of the transportation loans for government assisted refugees is a moral and humanitarian effort to help the poorest of refugees. It also makes economic sense.

For your referral, enclosed is a briefing note on the refugee transportation loan issue, as well as a booklet with refugees' stories. We will be in contact with you to schedule a meeting. We look forward to working with you to end the transportation loan program.

Sincerely,

Councillor Judy Villeneuve
Chair, Social Policy Advisory Committee

Councillor Vera LeFranc
Vice-Chair, Social Policy Advisory Committee

Pc. Mayor Linda Hepner
Vincent Lalonde, City Manager
City of Surrey, Social Policy Advisory Committee

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA

Issue: Transportation Loans for Government Assisted Refugees

Background

Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) came into effect in 2002. The change from 'ability to establish' to 'need for protection' included in this new Act has resulted in significant changes to the profile of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) selected for resettlement to Canada. Those arriving since 2003, when the first post-IRPA GARs arrived, are more likely to have low literacy levels and significant physical and mental health issues. There are more single-parent households and larger families. Government Assisted Refugees represent a very small proportion of new immigrants to this country, with only about 6,000-7,000 coming to Canada each year.

Surrey has emerged as a primary destination for Government Assisted Refugees arriving in Metro Vancouver. Since 2005, about 200 newly-arrived GARs have settled in Surrey each year. At least a third of these are children and youth under 18 years old. The City of Surrey views as a priority the successful settlement and integration of these vulnerable refugee families into our community.

Transportation Loan Program

Upon arrival in Canada, Government Assisted Refugees are asked to sign a government transportation loan document. The loan covers costs associated with transportation, pre-entry medical exams and a service fee. The maximum amount for an individual loan is \$10,000. Children over 18 are assessed their own loans, meaning the total amount owed by a family may exceed the \$10,000 limit. The new residents are expected to begin repaying this loan within 12 months and interest begins accruing after 3 years. Canada is the only country in the world that makes refugees pay for the medical exams and charges interest on transportation loans.

A Surrey-led study of the housing experiences of refugees in Surrey, conducted in 2009, revealed low income levels and significant housing affordability issues. The ramifications of the transportation loan to refugees are significant.

The Resettlement Assistance Program National Network has been tracking the results of the transportation loan program for over ten years. Across the country, they report observing higher at-risk homelessness, increased use of food banks, family breakdown due to income instability and youth dropping out from high school to assist their parents in improving household income. These are all outcomes that impact Surrey and other local communities.

The Federal government could absorb the transportation and medical expenses for all Government-Assisted Refugees admitted to Canada at a cost of \$13 to \$15 million annually. Forgiving outstanding loans would cost approximately \$38 million.

In October 2009, the City of Surrey put forward a Resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities' Annual Convention calling for the termination of the refugee transportation loan program. The Resolution was endorsed by all BC municipalities. In September 2010, the Resolution was adopted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) National Board of Directors.

Request

It is requested that the Government of Canada take all necessary actions to cancel all outstanding refugee transportation and pre-entry medical loan debt and cease seeking repayment of the transportation and pre-entry medical costs for new Government Assisted Refugees coming to Canada.

Contact

Vincent Lalonde
City Manager
City of Surrey
Phone: 604-591-4122
Email: VALalonde@surrey.ca

Pawthiblayhtoo Kee's Story

Pawthiblayhtoo Kee, 33, is a refugee from the Karen region of Myanmar who, after 31 years living in a series of refugee camps, came to Canada in November, 2006 with her husband and two young daughters - eight-year-old Wahdepaw and three-year-old Palace, who was named after the infant formula on which she was fed when her malnourished mother could not produce breast milk. The family now lives in a one-bedroom basement suite in Surrey.

Since it is their first year in Canada, the family of four is receiving financial assistance from Citizenship and Immigration. Under the program, they are eligible to receive a monthly cheque for a maximum of \$690 to cover rent and utilities, and up to \$615 for food. Their actual rent is \$595, and Pawthiblayhtoo budgets \$140 for public transit, \$45 for hydro, \$90 for cable, and \$400 for food.

**“We are poor, she said.
But we are happy.”**

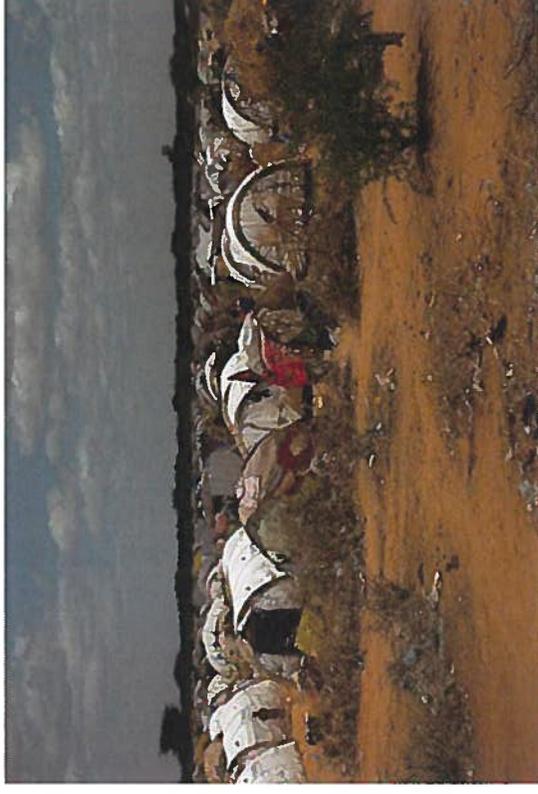
After one year in the country, the couple will be required to begin making installments to the federal government to cover the \$11,000 transportation loan given to them in order to make the trip to Canada.

A teacher trainer in the NGO-run refugee camps, Pawthiblayhtoo is eager to pick up computer training and get a job. Her husband hopes to get work as an unskilled labourer. “Right now, I am very poor with education, I cannot do nothing. But, in the next two years (that) will come, I hope,” she said.

*Story based on: “Mother of two eager to get job training” Vancouver Sun, June 20, 2007

After one year in the country, the couple will be required to begin making installments to the federal government to cover the \$11,000 transportation loan

Government Assisted Refugee Transportation and Medical Loan



Stories of Hardship & Hope

Canada accepts refugees that are identified by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees as among the world's most desperate people in need of protection and resettlement. These Government Assisted Refugees are selected, and have their claims assessed, overseas. They arrive in Canada with the right to permanent residence.

Upon arrival in Canada, Government Assisted Refugees are asked to sign a government transportation loan document. The loan covers costs associated with transportation, pre-entry medical exams and a service fee. The maximum amount for an individual loan is \$10,000. Children over 18 are assessed their own loans.

The new residents are expected to begin repaying their loan within 12 months and interest begins accruing after 1 to 3 years. Canada is one of only a few nations to require repayment of transportation costs, and the only country in the world that makes resettled refugees pay for the medical exams and to charge interest on transportation loans.

Canada is the only country in the world that makes resettled refugees pay for the medical exams and to charge interest on transportation loans.

The City of Surrey passed a Resolution urging the Government of Canada to terminate the Transportation Loan Program for Refugees. The Resolution was endorsed by the Union of BC Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

For more information please contact:
Councillor Judy Villeneuve
604.591.4625
JAVilleneuve@surrey.ca



Amel Madut's Story



Amel, who had escaped often horrific circumstances, could barely speak English, had no job prospects and three young children to support, now owed the Canadian government \$5,600

Amel Madut was 14, living in her native Sudan, when government soldiers entered her town in 1984 and began shooting at anyone who crossed their paths. Amel was at school, and as the soldiers were blocking her way home, she initially hid in the woods. Eventually she and other students started to walk. For more than three months, they walked from South Sudan to a refugee camp in Ethiopia.

Amel survived to reach the refugee camp. Only to be taken as a wife by a rebel soldier. She soon became a mother and found herself moving from one refugee camp to another, from Ethiopia to Sudan and eventually, to a United Nations refugee camp in Kenya.

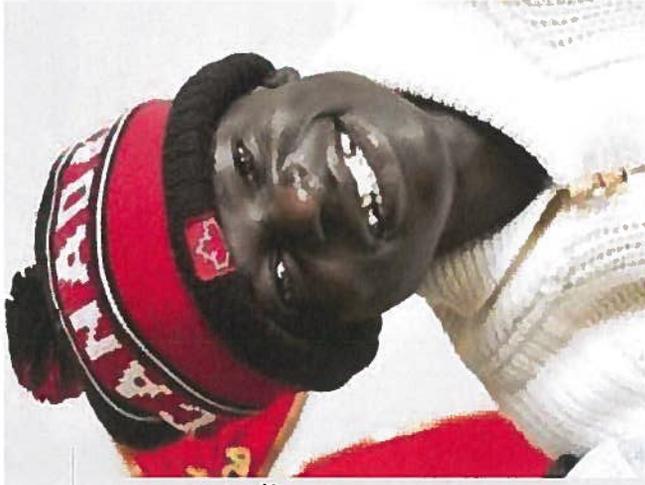
“I told them I'm not working, they said, 'you have to pay.'”

So she started paying \$85 a month. A large sum considering she was receiving \$1,000 a month on assistance, plus a few hundred dollars in child tax benefits. Her rent alone was \$970. “It was difficult but I had no choice,” she recalled. “I had to do it. Sometimes I go to the food bank.”

It took more than six years to repay the money. Amel said it was made more difficult by the regular statements she received, on which the amount owing never changed. “I'm paying, paying, paying and you still see the same amount ... I don't feel good, like I'm doing nothing.”

Today, the loan is paid off. Still life is not easy, but at least the burden was lifted. And she's grateful to Canada for getting her out of the refugee camp. “...here is better. You can have shelter, medicine and so many good things.”

Peter Yuot's Story



Peter was forced to drop out of upgrading courses at Douglas College when he was told he wasn't eligible to apply for a student loan until his federal bills were fully covered. He has since worked in a temporary job as an attendant at an art gallery, as a security guard during the 2010 Olympics, and in his current job at a homeless shelter in Surrey. Earning \$10 per hour makes it difficult to repay the loans.

It was during one of these visits he remembers being given a metal Jerry can to drink from. It was marked with blocks of English letters and an eye-catching red-and-white decal. A friend told him the foreign words spelled *Courtesy of the Government of Canada*. “That is how I learned about Canada,” he says.

Peter came to Canada in November 2008 with his brothers Jacob, 16, and Paul, 14. Peter has been more father than brother to the boys since they were placed in his care a decade earlier.

A year later, Peter received notice to begin paying back \$4,300 in federal loans for himself and his two younger brothers. The loan payment was a heavy burden on Peter who was already finding it extremely difficult to stretch the little money he earned on rent, utilities and food.

Peter was forced to drop out of upgrading courses at Douglas College when he was told he wasn't eligible to apply for a student loan until his federal bills were fully covered. He has since worked in a temporary job as an attendant at an art gallery, as a security guard during the 2010 Olympics, and in his current job at a homeless shelter in Surrey. Earning \$10 per hour makes it difficult to repay the loans.

However, unlike many Sudanese families he knows who are still struggling to repay their loans after many years in Canada, Peter has been able to repay his loan with the help of the First Lutheran Church and a good friend.

Peter's younger brothers are still both full-time highschool students. The boys arrived in Canada unable to speak English, and with the support of a volunteer tutor now both have plans to go to university. Peter himself has the long-term goal of becoming a lawyer.

*Many based on: “Is it fair to ask refugees to repay loans? Yes — with interest!” *Burnaby NewsLeader*, December 8, 2011

*Many based on an article in *BC's Refugee Refugees* — The Challenges Don't End at the Border, *Calgary West, AMCSA BC, Vol. 28, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2010*