

Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee (IRHC) Draft Minutes

**Thursday, January 28, 2010, 2-4 pm
Room 309, Metro Hall, 55 John Street**

Attendance:

Sana Afzal (CICS), Alakandra Brahma (Flemingdon N. S.), Bohinga Djimbi Mulema (Centre Francophone), Lorraine Clarke, Gaye Hainsworth, Rose Lee, Heath Priston and Azar Farahani (City of Toronto), Ubah Farah (Midaynta C. S.), Jessica Felmming (Christie Refugee W. C.), Gopi Krishna (Scarborough Housing Help), Elisa Martinez (the Learning Enrichment Foundation), and Vera Ratkovic and Tammy Moreau (Fred Victor).

- **Introduction, Minutes and Agenda**

Jean Suh chaired the meeting. A round of introductions followed with the approval of Agenda and the November Minutes.

- **Feedback on the City of Toronto Status Report on 2008 Access, Equity and Human Rights (AEHR) Achievements**

A power point presentation on the AEHR Achievements forwarded to the membership to make comments on the set of indicators of achievements. At the meeting, written examples of the various indicators were distributed. Participants made comments on several indicators and several members signed up to be contacted by Rose' team to share further input on the City's AEHR initiatives and the indicators.

- **Centre Francophone De Toronto (CFT)**

Boinga presented a slide show on the Centre services free of charge for the French speaking residents of Toronto.

In 1981, the Centre culturel et d'information francophone de Toronto was incorporated. One year later, the community developed bilingual policies with the federal government and opened two employment centres. CFT hosted a symposium, organized in partnership with Glendon College, on the future of French-language education.

During the 1980s, Toronto's Francophone community also created a Francophone medical information and support centre. In 1985, COFTM joined Centraide du Toronto Métropolitain or the United Way Toronto and 3 years later moved to its permanent location at 20 Lower Spadina Avenue.

COFTM gradually introduced an entire range of services to meet the growing needs of the French speaking residents. In 1992, COFTM offered the first summer camp for

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French-speaking children. It coordinated the first-ever French-language Christmas hamper project, Paniers de Noël.

The following year, COFTM started offering English-as-a-second-language courses as well as services to help French-speaking newcomers settle in. It also published a directory of French-language resources.

In 2003, CMSC officially began offering legal aid services in French. It also opened its child care centre, Le Coin de la petite enfance. CMSC became the only centre in Ontario to offer all of the social services and health services that Francophones needed, thereby providing a prototype of French-language service delivery.

The two organizations officially merged on April 28, 2004. With this momentum, CFT continued to actively offer services and officially opened a day treatment centre for children between the ages of 6 and 12 in École Ste-Madeleine, in North York.

CFT has expanded its services for newcomers that includes:

- intake and group support services
- partnering with Canadian professionals ; and
- outreach and volunteer coordination services

For further information, please visit: www.centrefranco.org.

- **Recession, Immigration and Homelessness Presentation, National Metropolis Conference, March, 2010**

Community agencies serving immigrants shared the new trends in clients housing situation and services needs as a result of the economic down turn for a research that Beth Wilson is preparing for the National Metropolis Conference in March.

The comments from the agencies were that housing is first thing that goes because of the shortage or lack of affordable housing in Toronto. A typical solution for the immigrant community is overcrowding, doubling up and couch surfing. It's very unhealthy, but hidden homelessness is very common. Agencies have learned of more families live in a one-bedroom with more than 2 children.

The recession has had greater impact on the newcomers and immigrants for their challenges to get a job or keep it. Many of them have no problems with the English

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language and or with accreditation. They just can't get those jobs that typically in a boom situation people would shy away from.

Front line workers have noticed increased demand for the eviction prevention services due to unemployment. The cut in full time jobs has created more of the lower pay and part time jobs. Participants reported seeing more families and individuals on social assistance and receiving applications for the Rent Bank and support for the utility cost.

- **IRHC Interim Action Plan Report**

Membership reviewed the draft interim report on the IRHC achievements in 2009. The working groups have completed considerable tasks in public education and advocacy. Meetings' attendances have been increased with new agencies coming on board, which bring further expertise and resources to the committee.

Azar will continue outreaching to the housing providers and asked the membership to tap into their resources and bring ideas to the committee.

- **The Honourable Patrick LeSage Review**

In October 2009 Toronto Community Housing Corporation asked the Honourable Patrick LeSage to conduct an independent review and prepare a report on the circumstances surrounding the eviction and subsequent death of Al Gosling and their Eviction Prevention Policy and practices, particularly as they relate to vulnerable' tenants.

A website was created so that interested persons could provide their confidential comments relating to this review. A telephone hotline was established to receive confidential recorded messages.

H. P. Lesage conducted consultation meetings with 300 – 400 tenants, TCHC frontline staff and management and representatives from community support agencies and legal aid clinics. IRHC membership present at the consultation made comments on the communication and language barrier, cultural issues of a large population of the TCHC tenants. The review will be finalized in the near future. It is expected the Report and its recommendations to have impact on revising the current TCHC policies and practices.

- **Working Groups update**

- The Research Working Group has further developed the draft of the study on hidden homelessness and housing overcrowding among immigrants.

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- Several members of the Public Policy and Public Education are preparing a presentation on the housing issues of the vulnerable immigrants and good practices in networking that consists of diverse stakeholder and expertise including funders, community service providers, academics, and advocates.

**Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee
Schedule and location of the future Meetings in 2010**

March 18, 2010, 2-4 p.m.	Room 310, Metro hall, 55 John Street
May 20, 2010, 2-4 p.m.	Room 310, “ “ “ “ “
July 22, 2010, 2-4 p.m.	Room 310, “ “ “ “ “
September 16, 2010, 2-4 p.m.	Room 310, “ “ “ “ “
November 18, 2010, 2-4 p.m.	Room 310, “ “ “ “ “

To RSVP, subscribe/unsubscribe, please contact Azar Farahani at 416-392-0068 or E-mail afaraha@toronto.ca, IRHC Website: <http://www.toronto.ca/housing/irhc.htm>