

## Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee (IRHC) Draft Minutes

Thursday, March 18, 2010, 2-4 pm  
Room 310, Metro Hall, 55 John Street

### **Attendance:**

Sana Afzal (CICS), Ron Barrow (Toronto Fire Services), Carol Boate & Jessica Scharger (CSPC-T), Alakandra Brahma (Flemingdon N. S.), Luis Carrillos (Hispanic Development Council), Sarah Fernando & Perly Constant (Service Canada), Anthea Darychuk (Romero House), Ubah Farah (Midaynta C. S.), Alexandra Flynn, Gaye Hainsworth, Bethy Ohenhen & Azar Farahani (City of Toronto), Carolina Gajardo (COSTI North York), Shelley Hasho & Vera Ratkovic (Christie Refugee Centre), Ahmad Haji & Janet Huynh (East York/East Toronto HH), Dariooosh Salahshoor (St. Christopher House), Mariam Saleh (Across Boundaries), Jean Suh (First Contact), and Ronny Yaron (Margaret Frazer House)

### **1. Introduction, Minutes and Agenda**

A round of introductions followed with the approval of Agenda and the November Minutes.

#### **• RENT Housing Help Forum**

Carolina informed the meeting of a Housing Help Network forum organized by RENT on February 25<sup>th</sup> at East York/East Toronto Session. The purpose of session was to introduce the Network of the Housing Help Centres supported by the City of Toronto and the opportunity for participants in the forum to feedback and make recommendations on housing and housing help services issues.

The forum looked into the existing resources for networking and training, and programs/services geared towards housing workers. For more information please visit: [www.housingworkers.ca](http://www.housingworkers.ca)

The forum was one of the 4 Forums organized through 2010. IRHC representatives will attend a session on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

#### **• Free Legal Hotlines for Newcomers**

Recently the Trillium Foundation and Legal Aid Ontario provided funding for the CLEO's "Your Rights. Your Language" project is the first to partner with immigrant communities to identify the kind of legal information they need and work with lawyers and translators to craft material in clear, everyday language that is understandable, culturally sensitive and legally accurate.

In addition to English and French, the service provides legal rights information, support and referrals in Arabic, Chinese, Somali, Spanish, Tamil and Urdu. The need to reach non-English and non-French-speaking communities with information about their legal rights has long been identified as a pressing issue by community legal clinics and social service agencies.

By providing the material in print and audio versions through CLEO's website, Facebook, Twitter, community radio and community newspapers, CLEO is aiming to reach those who need it most. Making the project unique is the number of languages and legal topics covered, as well as

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the hotline, Findhelp, a 24-hour, toll-free province-wide telephone line staffed by multilingual referral specialists familiar with CLEO's material.

The information is available on the web at [www.yourrightsyourlanguage.ca](http://www.yourrightsyourlanguage.ca) and through Findhelp at 1-866-667-5366.

- **National Metropolis Conference, March 18-21, 2010, Montreal**

The theme of the 12th National Metropolis Conference is “Immigration and Diversity: Crossroads of Cultures, Engine of Economic Development.”

IRHC representatives will be presenting at the National Metropolis Conference on March 20<sup>th</sup> at Montreal. The presentation is called, “Building Capacity Around Immigrant & Refugee Housing Needs, *The Case of Toronto’s Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee (IRHC)*. CERIS has sponsored our participation at the Conference.

Hispanic Development Council also is invited to present on the Peer support - Youth working with Latin youth in Canada.

- **Housing Help Resource Toolkit**

An update of the purpose of the housing help resource toolkit and the draft framework were shared with the participants. The intend is to bring the most commonly needed online resources for the housing help workers in one place, which will support the Housing Help sector by learning of and easy access to the relevant information.

A working group of the housing help providers and City staff will work on the further development and implementation of the Toolkit. Azar asked for the membership if they would be interested to join the working group to further develop the Toolkit. Ubah Farah from Midaynta Community Services and Luis Carrillos from Hispanic Development will join the first working group meeting on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

- **IRHC Interim Report & Planning**

Prince and Azar presented the 2009 IRHC outcomes based on the identified objectives for 2009-2010. The updates were in area of public education, information sharing on initiatives, research presentations, and policy advocacy areas. Participants made several positive feedbacks on achieving the identified goals and continued work in all the areas.

- **Membership Updates**

- **Forum to discuss the Accessibility For Ontarians With Disabilities Act (AODA)**

Objectives are to identify how the students housing will be affected and to create an inclusive workplaces.

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Date: March 25, 10, starting at 4:30 pm  
Location: University of Toronto

- **Investing in Neighbourhoods**, It is an initiative supported by the Toronto Employment and Social Services. It provides 1 year contract position with the non-profit organization to provide employment experience for the qualified Ontario Works recipients. The hours vary according to the organization’s needs.

For further details please visit: [http://www.toronto.ca/socialservices/invest\\_neigh.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/socialservices/invest_neigh.htm)  
Those receiving ODSP must talk to their workers if they want to participate.

- **CBSA**- There was a brief discussion about a recent incident of Canada Boarder Services Agency (CBSA) having entered a women’s shelter to arrest a resident.
- **Houselink**- The organization is an alternative housing provider, which in coordination with the Housing Connection provides subsidized supportive housing.

**Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee  
Schedule of the next Meetings**

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<b>May 20, 2010, 2-4 p.m.</b>	<b>Room 302,</b>	<b>Metro hall, 55 John Street</b>
<b>July 22, 2010, 2-4 p.m.</b>	<b>Room 310,</b>	<b>Metro hall, 55 John Street</b>
<b>September 16, 2010, 2-4 p.m.</b>	<b>Room 310,</b>	“ “ “ “ “
<b>November 18, 2010, 2-4 p.m.</b>	<b>Room 310,</b>	“ “ “ “ “

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