

Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee (IRHC) Draft Minutes

**Thursday, May 20, 2010, 2-4 pm
Room 310, Metro Hall, 55 John Street**

Attendance:

Afzal, Sana (CICS), Alsafadi, Banah, & Boido, Olimpia & Salahshoor, Darioosh (St. Christopher House), Bero, Marek & Waters, Sherry (Assessment & Referral Centre, City of Toronto), Brahma, Alakandanda (Flemington N S), Carrillos, Luis (Hispanic Development Council), Cheung, Gwynne & Faharani, Azar & Flynn, Alexandra & Sharif, Shajia & Samsa, Sonja & Silva, Agustina (City of Toronto), Fernando, Sarah & Pascucci, Wanda (Service Canada), Gajardo, Carolina (COSTI Immigration Services), Helen Maciuk & Suh, Jean (First Contact), Huynh, Janet & (RENT/EY ET), McPherson, Lesa (Regent Park CHC), Moreau, Tammy (Fred Victor Centre), Ngo, Thuan (Houselink), Saleh, Mariam & Tegeste, Emiru (Across Boundaries MHC), and Yaron, Ronny (Margaret Frazer House)

• Introduction, Minutes and Agenda Approval (2:00 p.m.)

Carolina opened the meeting. After a round of introductions, Agenda was approved. The Minutes will be finalized and forwarded to the mailing list.

Jean, a Committee Co-Chair continued on chairing the meeting. She informed the members that the next IRHC meeting will take place on July 22, 2010, in room 310.

• Homelessness and Immigration: Toronto's Changing Face, Stephen Hwang

Mr. Hwang was not available due to a patient's emergency conditions in the hospital. Copies of the presentation were distributed to participants. The presentation has been reschedule for the July 22nd Meeting.

• Mental Health issues and Services, Ronny Yaron and Nashwa Tawfiq, Mariam Saleh and Emiru Tegeste

- 'At Home' Study:

Mariam and Emiru gave an overview about the Mental Health Commission of Canada research project, 'At Home'. The Toronto project includes recruiting and supporting 100 immigrants through this study.

The steps in identifying the suitable candidates and working with them are including:

- Applicants have to be 18 years or older, program also applies to families.
- Fill out the Referral Form and fax it to the contact information at the St. Michael Hospital

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- To assess the eligibility, a researcher will set up two interviews with the client
- Once a client is accepted to the project, a case manager will be assigned
- Across Boundaries will work with the clients from ethno-racial/people of colour
- Clients will receive support with their rent subsidy, furniture and other supports as needed
- If clients resign from the research project before it ends, the furniture is theirs to keep
- This Housing First model in this project has been adopted from a similar program in New York
- This is a comparison study
- People with mental health issues have difficulties accepting help. The trend is to go back where they feel safe
- Life skills are another issue
- Currently 16 people are in the program and 9 of them have been housed
- This project needs more clients enrolment

Azar encouraged the membership to identify suitable clients and make referral. Copies of the “At Home” Study Referral Form were distributed at the meeting. Referral Form is attached.

Should you have any questions, please contact Miriam Saleh by email, miriam@acrossboundaries.ca, phone at 416-787-3007 ext 290.

- Mental Health issues and Services:

Ronny from Margaret Frazer House spoke on the impact of the hidden mental health issues on a person’s life. She introduced Faduma who used to be a client with the Margaret Fraser House.

Faduma related her journey and what triggered her problems. The stigma attached to the mental health issue, holds a person back from admitting that something is wrong and as a result they do not seek help or speak about it. For immigrants, language and culture chock are additional barriers in accessing services and recovery. A co-ordinated approach helped Faduma to deal with her situation and overcome many obstacles.

Ronny introduced the ‘Making Choices’, a comprehensive guide to mental health services, supports and resources in the City of Toronto. The Guide is available on the CRCT website: <http://www.crct.org/choices/> and www.crct.org.

Nashwa distributed the CRCT’s publication, Navigating Mental Health Services in Toronto, A Guide for Newcomer Communities and other relevant information at the meeting.

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Nashwa referred to information that Faduma and Ronny shared with participants and confirmed similar experience and challenges of the clients with mental health issues served by the Sojourn House programs.

Participants were also interested to have a discussion on the housing individual with mental health issues and the prevention of social isolation.

- **Economic Stimulus Funding, Affordable Housing Office, Simon Liston**

Simon presented a slide show on statues of the various project with details on the City’s housing goals and the positive impact of the federal and provincial contributions through the Economic Stimulus for Affordable Housing Program in achieving the Mayor and City Council’s priority to create 1,000 new affordable homes annually.

In March 2009, the province announced an investment in affordable housing of \$622 million to match funding announced in the federal government’s 2009 budget, bringing the overall total investment for affordable housing in Ontario to \$1.2 billion. Of this amount, \$545 million was earmarked for the creation of 4,500 new affordable rental homes, and \$704 million is to be used to renovate 50,000 existing social housing units. Of the \$545 million for affordable rental housing, \$370 million is targeted for seniors and disabled people, while \$175 million is for a mix of families and individuals. This funding was for ‘shovel ready projects’, and offered on strictly use it or lose it basis.

This Federal/Provincial capital funding averages \$120,000 per unit, and is supported by City incentives that include:

- Development charges waived
- Fees and permits waived for non-profits
- Property taxes waived for term of legal agreement

Affordable Housing Program Extension approved developments

| Developer | Location | # of New Units | AHP Funding | City Assistance |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Toronto Community Housing – Mc Cord | King St. / River St. (Ward 28) | 127 | \$16.5 m | \$3.18 m |
| WoodGreen Community Services | 270 Donlands (Ward 29) | 44 | \$4.4 m | \$1.90 m |
| The Remington Group | 8 Chichester Place (Ward 40) | 210 | \$25.2 m | \$3.15 m |
| Verdiroc Development Corporation | 1001 Queen St W (Ward 19) | 179 | \$21.5 m | \$2.80 m |
| Minto Apartments | 7-21 Richgrove Dr. (Ward 4) | 204 | \$24.5 m | \$2.60 m |

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| Deauville Place Inc. | 5 Deauville Lane (Ward 26) | 62 | \$7.4 m | \$.50 m |
| Patricia and Bathurst Developments Inc. | 485 Patricia Avenue (Ward 10) | 237 | \$28.4 m | \$3.40 m |
| Total | | 1,063 | \$127.9 m | \$17.53 m |

With rents averaging 80% of AMR, these units are within the affordable range for the working low income, but not yet at levels that meet the needs of more at-risk populations. Agreements are in place to keep the units affordable for 25 years.

For more information, please visit www.toronto.ca/affordablehousing

- **Membership Updates:**

Centre for Information and Community Services (CICS) is hosting a summer festival on June 19, 2010 12-4 pm at 2330 Midland Ave, 416-292-7510.

Sana from CICS also distributed flyers on the upcoming Newcomers’ Orientation, June 11, 2010 from 2:00 pm – 4:3:0 pm. at Oriole Community Centre, 2975 Don Mills Road.

- **IRHC 2010 Meetings:**

Schedule of the next Meetings

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| July 22, 2010, 2-4 p.m. | Room 310, | Metro hall, 55 John Street |
| 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>