

Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee (IRHC)  
Draft Minutes

Thursday, July 22, 2010, 2-4 p.m.  
Room 310, Metro Hall, 55 John Street

**Attendance:**

Sufi Aleem (ACSA), Myriam Canas-Mendes (*Weston King Neighbourhood Centre*), Luis Carrillos (*Hispanic Development Council*), Sara Clenyg-Jones & Gopi Kirshna (SHHC), Anthea Darychuk, Joe Da Silva (*Stonegate CHC*), Anthony Fernando, Alex Flynn, Gaye Hainsworth, April Hawly, Alice Broughton, Gwynne Cheung, Sonia Samson, and Azar Farahani (*City*), Jessica Flemming (*Christie Refugee Welcome Centre*), Carolina Gajardo & Jorge Hidalgo (*COSTI*), Sutama Ghosh & Vanessa Goettier (*Ryerson University*), Haji, Ahmed & Janet Huynh (*EYET Family Resources*), Shelley Hasho & Vera Ratkovic (*Christie Refugee Welcome Centre*), Priya Kissoon (researcher), Stefanie Krasij (*Adelaide Resource Centre for Women*), Linsey MacPhee and Christina Swearing (*Toronto Drop-in Network*), Lesa McPherson (*Regent Park CHC*), Bob Murdie (*York University*), Cyriaque Njeimana (*Centre Francophone*), Darioosh Salahshoor & Lynne Woolcott (*St. Christopher House*), Jean Suh (*Canadian Red Cross*), Sandra Van (*LAMP CHC*), and Ronny Yaron (*Margaret Frazer House*)

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

Jean opened the meeting. After a round of introductions, Agenda was approved. The Minutes of March 18th and May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 were reviewed and approved. The members were informed that at the next meeting on September 16<sup>th</sup> there will be a presentation on Energy Issues.

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

The focus of this study was dedicated to reduce health inequities through innovative research. The three groups studied were: recent immigrants, non-recent Immigrants and Canadian born. Recent immigrants tended to be much younger, more females, more-likely to be non-white and more likely to be parents with children. Recent and non-recent immigrants had higher education, lower income and were homeless for the least amount of time. In regards to the health status; every group was just below the average but found that Immigrants are generally healthier than the host population.

Mental health issues were most common among the recent immigrants. Out of the 2,516 people screened, 1,634 individuals were eligible and 73% (1,189) of them agreed to participate. Refugees, people that were unable to speak English and/or give informed consent, or never had Ontario Health Insurance (OHIP) were excluded from the study. For classification purposes the research looked at

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the health status and problems such as chronic health conditions and mental health issues. One of the findings was that compared to Canadian born homeless, recent immigrants are less likely to have drug or alcohol problem.

The study examined what was keeping people homeless. The main reason was insufficient income, followed by lack of suitable/adequate housing and lack of job/employment. Implications are: Focus on job skills, training and employment for this group. Focus on culturally appropriate mental health services for recent immigrants who become homeless and focus on strategies to assist re-settlement for recent immigrants.

After the presentation Dr. Hwang answered question of the attending members. He will forward a PDF file of his power point presentation and the website that contains the journal were the data was published to Azar for distribution.

- **Community Health Centres Services, Serving Torontonians without a Health Coverage, Joe Da Silva, Stonegate Community Health Centre (CHC)**

CHCs offer a wide range of the primary health care and health promotion services. CHCs are funded by Local Health Integration Networks; and supported and managed by non-profit, community-based boards. CHCs address barriers to health and provide support for non-insured persons.

This program does not allow for drop-ins, clients/patients have to be registered in order to receive care. If one is not a registered, clients can still access a variety of different programs.

Stonegate CHC serves three groups of uninsured clients: refugees, persons without status and those waiting for OHIP cards. Students on visitor or student visas are excluded from the CHC services. This program provides primary care to those without health insurance. Services are including the prenatal care and mental health.

CHCs developed in the inner city core to respond to the local health issues to determine priorities. Less than 5% of government health funding is given to CHCs. According to a study CHCs are cost effective and efficient. The percentages of uninsured people accessing Stonegate's CHC services are quite low. Most clients are families.

- **Drop-in Services and Partnerships that Work**

Linsey MacPhee gave an overview of the Toronto Drop-in Network (TDIN). Participants received a copy of her presentation. Key point of TDIN: it works to

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increase capacity of the Drop-in Services Sector in Toronto. The coordination and communication among service providers allow for a broader service access and an integrated service network. TDIN resources include a Good Practices Toolkit and the Drop-In Services Skills Certificate (DISSTC) and other training and capacity building programs. TDIN made significant contribution to the City of Toronto Drop-in Review.

Myriam Canas Mendes, Drop-in Worker with the Weston King Neighbourhood Centre which is located in the Mount Dennis, Ward 2, talked about their range of services which include a full drop-in (Monday & Friday), Community Supper (Tuesdays 6 – 6:30 p.m.), One on one service (Wednesday), Women only (Thursday) and Coffee & Snacks program (Saturday and Statutory Holidays). They would like to increase services provided to immigrants, barrier to overcome is language.

Aleem Sufi, Outreach Coordinator with Agincourt Community Services Association (ACSA) located in Scarborough talked about their community engagement and the various programs and services available at ACSA. Like Weston King Neighbourhood Centre they also experience language barriers in serving immigrants. Emerging needs identified is to have a pool of translators that agencies could draw from. ACSA has worked and collaborated with other agencies in the area to provide more services. ACSA uses a case management approach.

Sandra Van, from LAMP located in Etobicoke South reported that they offer a 3 day a week drop-in program that also deals with addiction and harm reduction. Their settlement services saw an increase in numbers of newcomers and refugees. LAMP's integration services have existed for 35 years. They accept internal referrals. Many of their clients come to the drop-in to be fed and to receive help in paying their bills. An Ontario Works social worker comes to the LAMP about once a week to answer questions. LAMP does not collect information from their clients and do not require them to register in order to use their services.

*Lynn and Darioosh, from St. Christopher House gave an overview of the St. Christopher House Meeting Place Drop-In which is located at Queen & Bathurst. They have been serving clients for 20 years and are open 5 hours/5 days a week. The agency serves about 200 clients each day. 65% of their clients are First Nations people and 35% are immigrants. Their goal is to reduce social isolation. They have various group activities, recreation and have legal clinics available for clients. Similar to LAMP, the agency do not ask clients for their ID. Most of immigrants served at the drop-in program may not have immigration status. The agency has a Newcomer Settlement Program.*

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Azar invited the drop-in representative to come to the next IRHC meeting to discuss the potential partnership between the settlement, housing help services with the drop-in program to more effectively use the existing community services resources to address the service gaps for immigrants in Toronto.

### ▪ **Access to Affordable Housing in Toronto Study**

Anthony Fernando, an Urban Fellow is working on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of a review of access to affordable housing in Toronto. He gave an overview of his study's focus and presented three questions:

1. *What changes to the Special Priority P application and intake process do you think should be made*
  - Improve technology
  - Time consuming online application is an issue
  - Required documentation for cohabitation prevents individuals from receiving help.
  - Scanning documents instead of mailing
  - There is a problem with providing proof that abuse is still ongoing even though the person does no longer live with the abuser.
  - Fraud is an issue as well
  
2. *How well does local access priorities program (1 in 7) work those groups? Is there anything that needs changed in the intake and verification process?*
  - Participants expressed very much interest to discuss the issues. Given the limited time available, questions will also be sent by email to the IRHC list. Anthony requested feedback to be sent to his email: [afernan3@toronto.ca](mailto:afernan3@toronto.ca).
  
3. *Are there one or two things that you would like to see changed or adjusted in the current social housing access system?*
  - Good orientation and make sure that applicants understand the importance of updating their contact information.
  - Need to make it clear what the difference is between non-profit organizations, private non-profit housing providers and the TCHC.
  - Provide information in clients languages

### **Home Energy Program**

Mike Mulqueen from City Environmental Office will be giving a presentation on the New Home Energy Program at the upcoming meeting. As soon as the

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program is launched the information on the Home Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program for Low-Income Residents will also be distributed to the IRHC mailing list.

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

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**September 16, 2010, 2-4 p.m., Room 310, Metro hall, 55 John Street**

**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](mailto:afaraha@toronto.ca), IRHC Website: <http://www.toronto.ca/housing/irhc.htm>