

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

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

### **Attendance:**

Sara Clenyg-Jones and S. Gopikrishna (Scarborough Housing Help), Luis Carrillos (Hispanic Development Council), Gaye Hainsworth, Sonali Chakraborti and Azar Farahani (City of Toronto), Ahmad Haji and Janet Huynh (EYET-RENT), Jorge Hidalgo and Bernado Novaro (COSTI North York), Iris Lee (Stonegate CHC), Bob Murdie (CERIS- York U), Linsey MacPhee (Toronto Drop-in Network), Cyriaque Njemimana (Centre Francophone), Jean Suh and Miriam Kutesa (First Contact), Bill Sinclair (St. Stephen's House), Beth Wilson (Social Planning), Ronny Yaron (Margaret Frazer House), and Wendy Zhang (Flemingdon NS).

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

A round of introductions followed with the approval of Agenda and Minutes of July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

### **2. Bill C11, The Balanced Refugee Reform Act**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada has announced this new legislation would support the underlying principles of Canada's asylum system: ensuring fairness, protecting genuine refugees and upholding Canada's humanitarian tradition. In total, \$540.7 million would be set aside to implement the changes to the asylum system and to resettle more refugees from overseas. The new asylum system would come into effect in the next 12 to 18 months, following royal assent.

On the resettlement side, CIC would be ramping up over the next two to three years to resettle up to 2,500 more refugees a year. It would determine where these refugees will come from as part of the annual planning process that occurs each year in consultation with its partners, such as the UNHCR and private sponsors. In addition, the Resettlement Assistance Program would be increased by \$9 million a year to help provide government-assisted refugees with immediate and essential services and income support to assist them in establishing themselves in Canada.

Gopi and Azar made a presentation providing an overview of the global people displacement, world refugee scope, the Canadian context, and information on immigration and refugee classes and processes in Canada. The recent Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) changes, such as the Bill C-11: The Balanced Refugee Reform Act.

Bill C-11 will make changes to the current system in the following areas:

- New Refugee Protection Division at the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB)
- New Refugee Appeal Division at the IRB
- Future transfer of PRRA to IRB
- Humanitarian and Compassionate Review Changes

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- Assisted Voluntary Returns Program
- Reduced Processing Timelines
  - Fast-track decisions for designated countries of origin
  - Multiple level of appeals

There some uncertainty among the community service providers and immigrant advocates about the practicality of the Bill in term of timelines, fairness, and potential pressures on the refugees and the community service providers.

Red Cross- First Contact is working on the revising the information packages for refugees and has organized information workshop for the service providers. According to the Canadian Centre for Refugees many questions about the new law are still to be decided. Some will be determined through *Regulations* by CIC and other will be part of the *IRB Rules*. Instructions and training will also influence implementation.

#### **3. Home Energy Help Program**

Azar referred to the September 16<sup>th</sup> presentation by the GreenSavers staff. The program has been launched and referral can be made. A large number of the program flyers were available at the meeting for the participants to take to their agencies for further distribution.

#### **4. Toronto Newcomer Initiative (TNI)**

Sonali Chakraborti, Project Manager walked the group through a power point presentation on the most recent update. TNI was initiated to explore new opportunities for the City of Toronto to advance the social and economic inclusion of immigrants to the city and enhance service systems. Currently, TNI is funded by Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada until March 31, 2011.

City Divisions directly involved are Parks, Forestry and Recreation; Toronto Public Health, Municipal Child Care Services, and Social Development and Finance Administration for 5 interconnected projects –all have a component of collaboration with the community-based sector. Other components are an advisory body and service delivery and networking. The work with community agencies helps to identify and meet service gaps and priorities and to develop policies and practices for good stewardship in funding community agencies.

The work includes the newcomer programming in recreation centers, settlement workers in City services, supporting families during reunification, and newcomer health research. A city-wide Local Immigration partnership Table includes the City of Toronto Steering Committee with OCASI & United Way Toronto; LIPs, TRIEC, COSTI, Francophone Sector, Council of Educators, and CIC.

#### **5. Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre (SHARC)**

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Azar distributed the information released on the SHARC by the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division. The street homeless and street involved clients can access services at the new Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre located at 129 Peter St. Starting at 8 pm October 28, street respite and walk-in referrals to shelter for singles and couples began at the new location, followed Friday morning with walk-in housing assistance.

At the SHARC, the Streets to Homes clients will be able to access five outreach and housing services that will help to build on our success in assisting clients to find housing and to reach the program's goal of ending street homelessness. These services will be phased in over the next short while. Services are including:

- 24-Hour Street Respite
- Walk-in Housing Assistance
- Walk-in Referral to Shelters
- Transition to Housing Beds
- Local Outreach Services

The program is aimed in serving Toronto residents and taxpayers through the cost-effective Housing First work that helps some of the most vulnerable clients to find and keep permanent housing and to achieve the dignity, security, and improved health and quality of life that come along with having a home of one's own.

Please call 311 or the toll-free number - 1 877 338 3398 to find an emergency shelter bed. 311 will connect any callers looking for help to the Central Intake staff.

### **6. Membership Updates and Service Trends:**

#### **RENT:**

- Disability rights and Housing advocacy working with ARCH. Tuesday November 23, 2010, 9:30am to 12:30pm at the Ralph Thornton Centre, 765 Queen St. East, 2nd Floor. Register at [www.housingworkers.ca](http://www.housingworkers.ca) or contact Jane Fairfield at [program@housingworkers.ca](mailto:program@housingworkers.ca) or 416-686-3390

- Landlord connect.ca Semi - Annual Networking Lunch on Thursday December 02, 2010 at 947 Queen St. East. Contact Thania Valle at [Support@housingworkers.ca](mailto:Support@housingworkers.ca) or 647-258-9981

#### **First Contact at the Canadian Red Cross**

First contact will hold a Refugee Determination workshop. RLO Lawyer will spend a little time going over the possible impacts of Bill C-11. December 17, 2010 at 21 Randolph Ave, (Dundas West and Bloor St) 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Service providers and clients can attend. Flyers will be sent out soon.

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### **Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee Schedule of the 2011 Meetings**

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<b>January 20, 2011</b>	<b>2-4p.m.</b>	<b>Room 304</b>	<b>Metro hall, 55 John Street</b>
<b>March 24, 201</b>	<b>2-4p.m.</b>	<b>Room 302</b>	
<b>May 19, 2011</b>	<b>2-4p.m.</b>	<b>Room 303</b>	
<b>July 21, 2011</b>	<b>2-4p.m.</b>	<b>Room 302</b>	
<b>September 22, 2011</b>	<b>2-4p.m.</b>	<b>Room 302</b>	
<b>November 24, 2011</b>	<b>2-4p.m.</b>	<b>Room 302</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>