

Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday July 21, 2011

Room 302, Metro Hall

2 – 4 p.m.

Attendance:

Peter J. Ackie (Horizons For Youth), Michelle Ball (Romero House), Ron Barrow (Toronto Fire Services), Alakananda Brahma (Flemingdon N S), Luis Carrillos (Hispanic Development Council), Sonali Chakraborti (City-SDFA), Gwynne Cheung (City-SSHA), Azar Farahani (City –SSHA), Carolina Gajardo (COSTI Immigrant Services), Janet Huynh (EYET Family Resources), Priya Kissoon (researcher), Yong Lee (Fred Victor Centre), Bob Murdie (CERIS), Gabriel Ortiz (Canadian Red Cross), Darioosh Salahshoor (St. Christopher House), Sonja Samsa (City-SSHA), Prince Sibanda (Don Valley LIP), Jean Suh (Canadian Red Cross), Andrea Weerdenburg (Toronto Refugee Community/Romero House), Beth Wilson (Social Planning Toronto), Paulina Wyrzgwowski (St. Christopher House), and Ronny Yaron, (Margaret Frazer House).

Regrets:

S. Gopikrishina (Scarborough Housing Help Centre), Nashwa Tawfiq (Sojourn House),

1. Introduction, Minutes, and Agenda approval

After a round of introductions, draft Minutes from May 26, 2011 and Agenda for the meeting were approved as presented. Prince Sibanda chaired the meeting.

Azar informed the meeting of several pamphlets and information resources available for the participants to take to their agencies.

2. Provincial and Federal Housing Strategies

Beth Wilson provided a brief update on provincial, federal and municipal strategies.

Bill 140, Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011 repeals the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and makes complementary and other amendments to other Acts.

This Act is to provide for community based planning and delivery of housing and homelessness services with general provincial oversight and policy direction; and to provide flexibility for service managers and housing providers while retaining requirements with respect to housing programs that predate this Act and housing projects that are subject to those programs. It attempts to reduce bureaucracy, reform rules, and streamline who is responsible for what. Non-Profit Housing still needs Ministerial Consent. It does not include any plans for new housing. Regulations are still being worked through.

Updated on Social Assistance Reform Act Review

The Social Assistance Review began in January 2011. Frances Lankin and Dr. Munir Sheikh are the appointed commissioners. Several consultations have taken place already.

Provincial Election

The political platforms do not have much on housing. Beth Wilson from Social Planning Toronto and the Co-Chair of the Housing Action Now is in the process of setting up an all candidates meeting to discuss housing through the housing. She will forward the details for distribution to IRHC. They are also planning to create some posters to create awareness of the housing issues. Carolina suggested that the Centre for Innovations or Sketch could be approached for the posters.

Bill C304 – Secure, Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Housing Act – Federal

This private member bill did not pass. Beth pointed out to the Wellesley Institute's on federal housing and homelessness investments. The investment has been shrinking since 1989 and that overall federal housing expenses will drop sharply from \$3 Billion in 2010 to \$1.74 billion in 2014. The CMHC corporate plan notes that the number of Canadian households assisted through federal housing investment will shrink from 626, 300 in 2007 to 540,800 in 2015.

Beth provided a handout to the committee members that include information on facts and figures in regards to a new housing framework. According to the research by Wellesley Institute and others at the local, national and international level confirms the link between poor housing and poor health, as well as premature death. Research also suggests that good housing contributes to better health for people and communities.

ACTO is planning a forum on the Right to Housing meeting on September 14, 2011, at 519 Church Street Community Centre.

Beth briefly addressed the Core Service Review and then answered questions re the new TCHC board, the selling of run down city owned social houses, etc.

3. West Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (WCHH)

Peter J. Ackie introduced himself and gave an overview on how WCHH in 1999 started.

Vision: Safe, affordable and adequate housing for all

Mission: To address systemic and local housing issues which impact on individuals, families and communities in the catchment area from Bathurst to the East, Etobicoke/Mississauga border in the West, Steels to the North and Lakeshore to the South. Their membership consists of both individuals and groups (registered and non-registered). They are currently working on setting up a website.

Their next meeting will take place on August 8, 2011 at the Jane Street Hub, from 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Contact Info: 416-781-9897x 22, peter@horizanforyouth.org. They will be also holding an all candidates meeting at the Jane Street Hub on September 21, 2011 from 5:00 – 9:00 p.m.

4. Toronto Local Integration Program (LIP)

Sonali Chakroborti from the Toronto Newcomer Initiative gave a presentation on what this program is about. Her goal was to get input and feedback from the committee on how to make this resource work

for a wide variety of users before placing it on Wikipedia. While it is intended for service providers, individual users can also access. The program could be an information clearinghouse. After the presentation she answered various questions. Sonali will forward the Position Paper to Azar for distribution.

For details please visit online information on: <http://www.toronto.ca/newcomer/>

5. World Refugee Day

Gabriel, a summer intern with the Red Cross, a member of the organizing committee provided some background on the importance of World Refugee Day. He read his letter on what this day meant to him. He stated that there is still lot of work to be done. This day brings awareness to the spirit of the World's Refugees. World Refugee Day took place on June 20 at Yonge Dundas Square from 11 am to 4 pm. Organizing agencies were: Canadian Red Cross, Sojourn House, Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, Don Valley LIP, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, and COSTI Immigrant Services.

6. Community Development - IRHCs Community Chairs Experience:

Carolina Gajardo and Jean Suh the two past Community Co-chairs expressed their positive experiences working with the IRHC and Azar to move forward the community development goals of the IRHC workplan. The Co-Chairs also found the exercise quite engaging and productive in area of enhancing their community development and leadership skills. Azar thanked Carolina and Jean, and acknowledged their multi-facet contributions to IRHC.

7. Membership Updates:

- The RENT upcoming workshops:
 - o Tenant Rights & Promoting Positive change: A session with FMTA, July 28th
 - o Practical Tolls: Trauma-Informed Support for People with Mental Health Issues, August 18th
 - o Training Essential Skills for Housing Help Services- Fall Series 2011
- Full details and registration at www.housingworkers.ca or contact 416-686-3390 ext 9989 or 9336
- Housing Access and Support Services for Newcomers Project, the Learning Enrichment Foundation, Fred Victor and Change Toronto will be hosting a consultation forum on training workshops for the settlement and housing workers on July 27th. For details, please contact mashton@fredvictor.org
 - A researcher from McGill University is working with the Romero House to collect the experience of the detained refugees. The researcher is will also interview the service provider. Please contact Nasha at 416-763-1303 for details and if you are interested to participate.
 - Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has released a call for a proposal focus on Community Building through Community Partnerships. This funding is coming through Partnership Grant Program (<http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/pp/grants.shtml>) . The purpose of this grant is to strengthen existing partnerships/networks and/or establish new partnership in not-for-profit

sector. The grant is up to \$300,000 for three years (not exceeding \$100,000/yr.)The deadline for submission is July 29th, 2011

- Call for Proposals for Pilot Project Seed Funding: The goal of the Welcoming Communities Initiative is to conduct collaborative research across communities and sectors in areas relevant to immigrant and minority settlement and integration in Ontario. In order to assist and encourage WCI members to secure funding (through grants, contracts, etc) and to expand their research, WCI will provide seed funding of up to \$5,000 for pilot projects that are expected to lead to full research proposals. The deadline for receipt of proposals is August 31, 2011. More information available on <http://www.welcomingcommunities.ca>.
- Scadding Court has supported an outdoor marketplace initiative with some panel guest speakers. For details please visit online information: http://www.scaddingcourt.org/live_local_marketplace

The Schedule of the upcoming IRHC meetings in 2011

<p>September 22, 2011 <i>2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</i> <i>Metro Hall Room 302</i></p>	<p>November 24, 2011 <i>2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</i> <i>Metro Hall Room 302</i></p>
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To RSVP, subscribe/unsubscribe, please contact Azar Farahani at 416-392-0068 or
E-mail afaraha@toronto.ca