

Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee (IRHC) Minutes

**Thursday, January 20, 2011, 2-4 pm
Room 304, Metro Hall, 55 John Street**

Attendance:

Laura Allen and Luis Carrillos, Vanessa Suilt, Victor Lopez (Hispanic Development Council), Alakandra Brahma (Flemingdon NS), Sara Cjones and S. Gopikrishna (Scarborough Housing Help Centre), Azar Farahani and Raluoa Bejan (City of Toronto), Jessica Flemming (Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, Carolina Gajardo (COSTI North York), Ahmad Haji and Janet Huynh (East York/East Toronto HH), Bob Murdie (CERIS-York University), Jean Suh (First Contact), Darioosh Salahshoor (St. Christopher House), Prince Sibanda (LIP), Andrea Weerdenburg (Romero House), Jeff Roulston (Social Planning Toronto), Ronny Yaron (Margaret Frazer House), and Zhiguang Zhang (Toronto Public Health)

1. Introduction, Minutes and Agenda

A round of introductions followed with the approval of Agenda and Minutes of November 18, 20120.

2. Update: Precarious Housing and Hidden Homelessness among Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Immigrants in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver Research

Bob Murdie gave an overview of the study in the three major Canadian cities. IRHC is a partner in this study in Toronto. The plan is to interview 200 newcomers that 100 of them. There will be focus groups with refugees. The work at COSTI North York is proceeding quickly with the help of the settlement, HOST and the Housing Help team. Alakandra is involved with the focus groups in Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services. The research team then will conduct focus group in Scarborough Housing Help Centre and Midaynta.

The lead research team will make a presentation in Ottawa on the February 17, 2011. The deadline to complete the research is the end of May 2011.

The Centre for Excellence in Research in Immigration and Settlement (CERIS) is funded by the federal government in 5 cities of Canada. University of Toronto, York University and Ryerson University are members of CERIS/Metropolis. Recently the Metropolis office moved to the York University.

Success Stories: Midaynta Community Services Home Ownership Initiative

Azar informed the meeting about the housing help initiative to deliver educational workshops on the home ownership that has been quite successful.

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Midaynta Community Services staff will provide detail information on this initiative at the next IRHC meeting.

3. Scarborough Housing Help Centre- The Hidden Homelessness Project

SHHC has developed a one-year project to look at the issues of newcomers in substandard or overcrowded housing. With the goal of shedding light on the problems arising from factors including poor employment prospects, SHHC encourages a strong focus on housing in the settlement process.

The Project offers three distinct, free workshops around the issues of Hidden Homelessness among Newcomers:

For Agency Staff:

The aim of the workshop is to identify and explore the issues surrounding housing as they relate to newcomer settlement. An interactive workshop, it will both inform staff and elicit experiences from workers that relate to the material presented. As a result, staff will have greater awareness of housing and related problems, as well as solutions and approaches that can be applied to their work.

For Newcomers

This workshop highlights some of the problems that result from newcomers not having a plan to develop their housing options over time. The goal of the presentation is to identify some issues that newcomers may be able to relate to and to encourage them to seek housing help services that can assist them to plan for, acquire and maintain housing in a challenging housing environment. Workshops in English, Tamil or Mandarin and in a combination of those languages are available.

For Landlords

Based on the premise that landlords and newcomers will benefit from a well-informed and proactive landlord, the Project offers a workshop to educate landlords. With attention to standards of habitability, landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities, we hope to improve the landlord/tenant relationship by promoting mutually respectful interaction. Landlords will have the option of an informal inspection of their rental units.

Booking: Contact Sara Clenyg-Jones at 647-405-3687 or by email sara.cjones@shhc.ca
Workshops are available during the fall and winter 2010-11.

4. Discussion: 2011-2012 Priorities for IRHC

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An IRHC working group has formed to advocate and provide support to the Local Immigration Partnership program through giving priority to housing issues among other newcomers' challenges and providing expert support.

Prince Sibanda and Azar will work on the IRHC draft work plan for 2011-2012 and bring it to the next session for the membership discussion and approval.

Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar Robert (Bob) Murdie; Carolina Gajardo (Community Chair), Manager of the COSTI North York Housing Help Centre; S. Gopikrishna, Executive Director of Scarborough Housing Help Centre; and Prince Sibanda researcher and LIP Coordinator of the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office were received recognition by the IRHC for their long term support and great contribution.

5. Membership Updates and Service Trends

- Membership discussed various client groups and their specific needs
- Refugee housing and housing help programs were interested to learn more about the limited rent supplement program for tenants to receive \$250 towards their rent for 2 years.
- On February 24, RENT has a cross service sectoral workshop from 9:30-12:30 at 947 Queen Street East. Please visit RENT (www.housingworkers.ca) website for this workshop details and the schedule of the future workshops.
- The CIC funding cuts on settlement agencies have created difficult situation for several agencies and language specific programs.
- The United Way's study on the aging hirise rental buildings was also discussed. Shelter, Support and Housing Administration is inviting a speaker from United Way to give a presentation on this study for the Rental Housing Advisory Committee meeting in March. IRHC members are also invited to join the session.
 - Date: March 7, 2011
 - Time: 9:30 a.m. to noon
 - Place: Room 310, 3rd floor, Metro Hall
 - Please send your RSVP to afaraha@toronto.ca
- The Red Cross -First Contact program has invited a lawyer from the Parkdale Legal Clinic on the Refugee Determination process on February 18th, 10-noon, at 21 Randolph Avenue.
- Luis Carrillos from Hispanic Development Council was requested to set up a workshop about the immigrant youth and the law issues at the next IRHC meeting.

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

<p>January 20, 2011 2:00 – 4:00pm Metro Hall, Room 304</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Minutes 	<p>March 17, 2011 2:00-4:00pm Metro Hall, Room 304</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Minutes
<p>May 19, 2011 2:00 – 4:00pm Metro Hall, Room 303</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Minutes 	<p>July 21, 2011 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Metro Hall Room 302</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Minutes
<p>September 22, 2011 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Metro Hall Room 302</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Minutes 	<p>November 24, 2011 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Metro Hall Room 302</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Minutes

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>