

## Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Thursday May 25, 2011

Room 310, Metro Hall

2 – 4 p.m.

#### **Attendance:**

IRHC Attendance – May 26, 2011

Peter J. Ackie (Horizons For Youth), Alakanda Brahma (Flemingdon N S), Luis Carrillos (Hispanic Development Council), Pamela Campbell (Robertson House), Ubah Farah (Midaynta C. S.), Azar Farahani and Laila Parpia (City –SSHA), S. Gopikrishna (Scarborough Housing Help), Kerttu Jokela (Journalist from Sweden), Priya Kissoon, Wendy Kwong (Toronto Public Health), Margaret Leopold and Zhiguang Zhang (Toronto Public Health), Mercedeh Madani (Social Planning Toronto), Mary-Jane McKitterick (East York, East Toronto Family Centre), Isabelle Montas, Valerie Molina (LIP Thorncliffe N.O.), Bob Murdie (York University Dept of Geography), Valerie Preston (York University), Sonja Samsa (City- SSHA), Uzma Shakir (City of Toronto), Ray Stephens (Learning Environment Foundation), Mohamed Tabit (Midaynta Community Services), Florence Wong (St. Stephen's Community House), and Ronny Yaron, (Margaret Frazer House)

Regrets: Carolina Gajardo (COSTI), Jean Suh (First Contact),

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

Minutes from March 17, 2011 and Agenda received approval as presented.

Participants approved new rotating IRHC Community Co-Chairs and congratulated Luis Carrillos, S. Gopikrishna, and Prince Sibanda for their interest to serve the committee for a 2 years term. All the new Chairs are long term members and supporters of the IRHC and well respected by the membership. They have prepared presentations and have joined working groups to move forward several initiatives. Azar also expressed great appreciation for the valuable contribution of the past Community Co-Chairs, Carolina Gajardo and Jean Suh. Luis Carrillos chaired the meeting.

#### **2. Colour of Poverty Campaign**

Uzma Shakir gave an overview on how Colour of Poverty was founded. It was set up in 2006 by members of the legal clinic system. It appeared that simple issues were becoming more and more complicated as reflected in the Michael Ornstein and Stats Canada reports.

Funded by Canadian Heritage, the Colour of Poverty project has developed a series of Fact Sheets addressing different aspects of racialized poverty and its negative impacts on education & learning, health & well-being, employment, income levels, justice and policing, immigration and settlement, housing and homelessness and food security.

The initiative partnered with many community groups including with Professor Golabuzi that assisted them with the stats. Professor Grace-Edward Galabuzi describes the issue: "Racialized communities are

experiencing a disproportionate level of poverty. In Toronto, they are three times more likely to be poor than others because of the barriers and challenges they face in the job market.”

Based on the information from clients and the stats they created 11 facts sheets. Purpose: to make connections to house, health, food, what organization to connect with, a community organizational tool. They planned to translate these fact sheets into 16 languages but only were able to do 6 so far. They also discovered a disturbing trend that kids are not doing too well. The Government of Ontario started a program strategizing poverty reduction. Race based data can be very helpful depending on how it is used.

### **3. City of Toronto Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Office (EDHRO)**

Uzma Shakir, Director of the Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Office gave an overview of the newly amalgamated office that is under the City Manager's Office and their mandate is corporate wide.

EDHRO is only 4 months into their mandate – they position themselves as an ally, resource and experts in certain subject matters. City strives to promote the culture of human rights through various strategies such as Toronto People Plan and good practices in customer service.

City of Toronto is currently conducting public consultation on the Toronto Service Review. There are 8 sessions City consultation sessions. Councillors and groups are also given the opportunity to share their feedback with the City. There is also online survey that is very popular and residents are encouraged to complete the survey by June 17, 2011.

Please visit the website to learn more, and to complete the survey:

<http://www.toronto.ca/torontoservicereview/index.htm>

### **4. Metropolis Research Update:**

*Precarious Housing and Hidden Homelessness among Refugees and Immigrants in the Toronto CMA*

Valerie Preston, Director of Metropolis thanked all the research partners. IRHC has been a partner with the study for drafting the proposal and through membership helping with the clients' surveys and service providers' focus groups. The Research is funded by the federal government, HRSDC, and has been conducted in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. The Final report will be submitted at the end of May 2011

Each member was provided with a copy of the Bibliography and Review of Canadian Literature from 2005 to 2010 in regards to Precarious Housing & Hidden Homelessness Among Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigrants by Robert Murdie.

Toronto is a city of immigrants with 80% of them being from a visible minority. Approx. 45% of the population within the metropolitan area are foreign born. Toronto is not adding to the rental stock. On one hand lost 70,000 affordable apartments and on the other hand gained 50,000 more expensive apartments.

Major Themes have emerged, some confirming findings from previous literature reviews and some new themes. Important themes include:

- a) Challenges and Barriers
- b) Housing Careers, Residential Mobility, Social Networks
- c) Settlement Patterns, Ethnic Enclaves, Segregation
- d) Housing Needs and Adaptations, Creating Home
- e) Homelessness, and
- f) Homeownership.

The question arises, “Is Canada moving towards a two-class immigrant society? The power point presentation is attached to this email.

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

<b>January 20, 2011</b> <i>2:00 – 4:00pm</i> <i>Metro Hall, Room 304</i>	<b>March 17, 2011</b> <i>2:00-4:00pm</i> <i>Metro Hall, Room 304</i>
<b>May 19, 2011</b> <i>2:00 – 4:00pm</i> <i>Metro Hall, Room 303</i>	<b>July 21, 2011</b> <i>2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</i> <i>Metro Hall Room 302</i>
<b>September 22, 2011</b> <i>2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</i> <i>Metro Hall Room 302</i>	<b>November 24, 2011</b> <i>2:00 – 4:00 p.m.</i> <i>Metro Hall Room 302</i>

To RSVP, subscribe/unsubscribe, please contact Azar Farahani at 416-392-0068 or  
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