



51 Clarkson Avenue, Toronto, Ontario Canada M6E 2T5 Tel: (416) 787-3007 Fax: (416) 787-0812
E-Mail: info@acrossboundaries.ca Web Site: <http://www.acrossboundaries.ca>

To: Budget Committee
City of Toronto

December 6, 2011

Letter of Support

Dear Members of the Budget Committee,

We are writing to support the work of the **Immigrant Women's Health Centre (IWHC)**, and to voice our concerns against the proposed \$200,000 cut to their operational budget for 2012.

Across Boundaries is a community –based mental health centre which provides a range of supports and services for people from racialized communities who are experiencing mental health problems and/or substance use. In the last fiscal year, about 330 women with very complex challenges accessed our services. Many require screening and education on female cancers and sexually transmitted infections. Every year, IWHC's Mobile Clinic comes to the centre twice to provide the women these highly valued health services. Our partnership with IWHC has greatly benefited our clients who are newcomer immigrants and refugees who require female doctors and are also dealing with systemic barriers such as language and access to appropriate sexual healthcare services. Through the Mobile Health Program, our female clients are able to access female doctors who are culturally competent and are sensitive around dealing with sexual healthcare.

The preventative services provided to our clients helps them maintain a good quality of physical/mental health that in turn enhances their sense of well-being. Our clients have the option of support from their case managers during the screenings through the Mobile clinic, which adds to their feelings of safety and confidence to participate in such private and personal procedures (such as Pap Smears and Breast Exams). They also benefit from translation from our staff and IWHS team, which makes the sessions less stigmatizing and the women are less anxious in this informal medical setting. The loss of this and other services offered by IWHS would have a significant impact on our client's mental and physical health.

We strongly feel that IWHS' focus is on preventative health practices and in the absence of such services there would be a greater burden on the health care system. As a result, recovery for our clients would be jeopardized if they are unable to access and benefit from these services. Once again we strongly support the continued, full funding for IWHC and hope that you will take the information presented in this letter in consideration as you go forward.

Sincerely,

Aseefa Sarang
Executive Director
Across Boundaries: An Ethnoracial Mental Health Centre
416 787-3007 ext. 226; aseefa@acrossboundaries.ca

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