



Hamilton

5.1.c

**Minutes
IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Thursday, February 8, 2018
City Hall, 71 Main St. W., Room 192/193, 6:30pm

Present: Suad Badri, Beau Daniels, Eman Ismail-Elmasri, Leo Johnson, Amed Farah, Holly McKean, Yohana Otite, Mir Islam, Zenaida Roque Cruz, Marie Robbins, Huzaifa Saeed

Also Present: Nadia Olivieri, Human Rights, Grace Maciak

Regrets: Mané Arratia, Ramon Petgrave (LOA), Noor Nizam, Dena Honig, Sylvia Shaheen (LOA), Sam Abraham

Absent: n/a

Chair: Zenaida Roque Cruz

Welcome and Introductions (6:45 pm)

Guests: *Sadhna Jayatunge HIPC representative and COH Community Engagement Coordinator*

1. Approval of the Agenda

(H. McLean/E. Ismail-Elmasri)

That the Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Committee approve the agenda of Thursday February 8, 2018 as presented

2. Declarations of Interest – None declared.

3. Approval of Minutes

(H. McLean/E. Ismail-Elmasri)

That the Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Committee approve the November 9, 2017 minutes as presented.

4. Presentations:

**4.1 Immigrant and refugee shelter access in the City of Hamilton
Presentation overviews:**

- Grace Baldwin, Good Shepherd Family Centre
 - The Good Shepard Family Centre is an emergency shelter for families which also provides diversion support (avert losing shelter) and eviction prevention
 - The shelter also supports refugee claimants at port of entry and supports persons with no status

- In 2017 the shelter served 128 families – 51% were refugees or person with non-status.
 - Refugee and non-status persons tend to stay at the shelter on average 17 more days than families
 - the main issue is the time to process a person with non-status – can't do anything – can't sign a lease, can't register
 - In 2017 the shelter saw a huge spike in July, August and September due the impact of Global issues.
 - Shelter staff not considered expert in the area of assisting with new comer issues – they are learning as they go
 - there is an identifiable gap for refugees as to where they can get additional services – the shelter staff focus on helping
 - **Mika House** is the only shelter that is specific to refugee
 - The biggest issue is New comer shelter
 - Can ask to place in hotel – last year there were 86 hotel referrals – 28% were for new comers
 - presenter believes that early access to permanent housing is the best solution for everyone
- Trish Lerner, Program Manager Mary's Place (Women's Shelter)
 - target group is single women
 - demographic information collected showed that usage went from 0-3 women/month in the first 3rd of last year to 15women/month in the last 3rd of the year – this influx reflects services to new comers
 - this is a result of women staying longer and results in less women receiving services overall
 - working with refugees and non-status persons is very new to the organization– usually work with mental and drug addiction issue
 - the following issues have been identified for new comers:
 - Lack of immigration lawyers in Hamilton.
 - referring to Toronto base lawyer
 - transportation issues to Toronto
 - lack of outreach workers to go with them
 - Lack of health coverage. They don't seek medical because they are afraid it will affect their status.
 - Avoiding to access hospital as without status can end up with costly bills.
 - New Comers don't qualify for recommended programs that have financial assistance.
 - Agencies don't have translation services.
- Charmain Shand , Program Manager Martha House (Women's Shelter)
 - Service women or children experiencing violence or homelessness
 - Seeing an influx of new comers which have created a big challenge for staff to understand issues and manage immigration issues
 - They are starting from scratch:

- lawyers
- language assessment
- interpreters, funding issue
- no funds to work with in the first few months while they are getting to the paper work
- if women is pregnant can see on site doctor but if addition tests are required have to pay
- The support after leaving the shelter seems to be an issue and some staff are extending their involvement with individuals beyond their stays at the shelter.
- There are not enough ESL programs in Hamilton. If they attend employment program, there is no translation services
- The see families who had trauma in their home country, can't start with any counselling because the settlement piece is so overwhelming.
- Presenter believes shelter service specific to new comer with skills in settlement and available funding can better service this demographic.
- Daryl Chezzi, Good Shepherd Centre (Men's Shelter)
 - Shelter experience waves and influx of men presenting with no status.
 - Some helpful strategies – make sure that they return to 3rd floor program – more private – allow to stay longer -18 days is the average stay. Program is full most times.
 - Medical care is an issue.
 - Main limitation is that Settlement Services don't apply or they are coming back to shelter workers as they are comfortable and trust them.
 - The shelter is setting up on-site programming.
 - In Toronto New Comer specific shelters are run by private religious organization.
 - Presenter believes that specific housing earmarked for new comers and some child tax benefit to subsidize housing would benefit.

4.2 Question and answer session

Member shared available resources regarding ESL distance learning that may be used at the shelter facilitiy

5. Business / Discussion Items: tabled as quorum lost at 7:55 pm

- 5.1 Attendance
 - 5.1.1.1 Child minding services
- 5.2 Membership Status
- 5.3 Open House Working Group Update
- 5.4 Housing Working Group Update
 - 5.4.1.1 AF&A dates (for I&R HWG)
 - 5.4.1.2 Invitation Status (Director, Housing Services)
- 5.5 Employment Working Group Update

- 5.5.1.1 AF&A dates (for I&R EWG)
- 5.6 Education Working Group Update
- 5.6.1.1 Invitation Status (Grace Mater)
- 5.7 Presenting to Council
- 5.7.1.1 2018 Work plan
- 5.8 Outstanding Business Items

6. Other Business

- 6.1 Due to a conflict with the Women of Distinction Awards night, members requested to move next month's meeting to the third Wednesday of the month.

MOTION:

(M. Robinson/H. McLean)

That the March 2018 monthly meeting of the Immigrant and Refugee be moved to Thursday March 12, 2018

7. Adjournment

That the Immigrant and Refugee meeting adjourn at 7:55 pm (due to loss of quorum)

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 15, 2018