

MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

Thursday November 25, 2021 - 1:00 – 2:30 pm online

PRESENT: Doug Peat, Barry Growe, Brad Kinnie (Journey Home Community), Derek Chu, Mohammed Zaqout, Ryan Reid, (Kinbrace), Marzieh Nezakat, Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC), Julia Wu (bc211), Jenny Lam (Options) Joni Rose (Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI), Nicole Stinson (BC Housing), Mahi Khalaf (SOS-ISSofBC), Melissa Giles (BC Rent Bank), Huda Bolbolan (SVNH), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Chair: Doug Peat (Journey Home Community)

Welcome, and land acknowledgement from the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Kwantlen nations.

Thanks to our funders the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, BC

- The October 28 HWG Meeting Minutes were approved.
- The agenda for this meeting was approved with the addition of an announcement by Joni Rose (MUNI)

Announcement:

Regarding the IRCC decision - Order in Council to restrict refugee claimants entering Canada has been rescinded - Joni Rose (MUNI)

In light of this change that might indicate more arrivals, as well as:

- international travel ban changes
- the state of emergency in BC (flooding)

there could be pressure on available housing resources. Therefore, IRCC has made available the use of a hotel, including quarantine facilities, to temporarily house refugee claimants who have no other housing option and are referred.

Government representatives (of MUNI) will meet with IRCC, SOS-ISSofBC and MOSAIC afternoon Nov 25 to discuss how referrals to the hotel will be organized.

Joni urged all agencies to look at their plans for responding to a higher demand right now and try to reserve housing for refugee claimants rather than housing other populations, as we know this housing will be needed.

QUESTIONS:

Q: (JHC) Has SOS considered housing at Belkin House?

Mahi (SOS): they are looking at all options depending on family size and composition

Q: (BC211) If people arrive irregularly and don't meet with CBSA/IRCC, then is there a process for them to be referred to those hotel spaces.

Mahi: we have to convince the claimant to contact CBSA who is the only body who can make the referral.

Julia: but she had heard that sometimes claimants get turned away??

Mahi: yes, this sometimes occurs – we are trying to straighten it out

Joni: please don't refer via any other mechanism at this time. If you hear of claimants, please use the system we will set up at our meeting today. (*see notes at foot of Minutes post-meeting)

Q: (Kinbrace) How long can claimants stay at the hotel:

Response: Not sure at this point how long the stay is – maybe 2-3 weeks

Q: What will happen if permanent housing is not found?

R: The province will have to look at that – trying to get a simple flow happening as this is very new. Trying to make sure that those who go the hotel get connected with support services.

Review of the BCNPHA Conference Workshop – Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC)

Doug started by mentioning a letter received from Jackson at BCNPHA congratulating MAP HWG on a very informative and attractive presentation, and a request to apply for presentation opportunities in 2022.

Jackie: thanked the panellist speakers: Doug, Mohammed (Kinbrace) Steven (Affordable Housing) for their presentations to encourage collaboration and more housing opportunities for claimants.

Conference workshop: Tuesday 16 November – about 30+ participants.

Shared video that was shown at the conference.

Comments: video provided a voice for refugee claimants themselves, provided information to both providers, as well as new refugee claimant arrivals.

Q: Can we share the video?

Yes, it will be made available for sharing.

Updates and discussions BC CHARMS - Jackie Sarvini

NOTE: because the database was featured at the MAP BC and FV MAP meetings it was agreed to be unnecessary to repeat – but for everyone here the presentation slides with notes are attached to these Minutes.

If you have any questions about the database, please contact:

Jackie: jsarvini@mosaicbc.org Marzieh: mnezakat@mosaicbc.org

The Report Book has been approved and was shared by Jackie for the first time. Yet to be published.

The report book brings voices and images to life from the research along the themes mentioned before.

Each section is phrased as a question: Do I belong? What does Home really mean? Etc. in order to increase empathy and empowerment of refugee voices.

The report book will be ready very soon to be shared in PDF format and also published physically – please email Marzieh or Jackie for a copy of: 'In Between Emergency, Transitional and Permanent Homes: Perspectives from Refugee Claimants and Service Providers.'

(Committee made several comments in the chat about how beautiful the report book is)

Question: Can we print it ourselves?

Marzieh: it is copyrighted so it must be a verified copy – prefer you request a copy.

Additional note from chat: as the book is copyrighted, it needs to be printed and presented in its entirety and not in the form of excerpts or single pages.

Q: Is the Innovative Housing Research available yet?

Res: – we are approving a new draft with the funder, and it will be available as soon as possible.

4.8 million-dollar RFP discussion

Doug shared the recommendations to MUNI that were based on the report that was supported by BC Government –

- capital funding was the most important and strongest recommendation that included matching funding,
- further recommendations included other details such as purposes for housing.

Joni responded for the Ministry with a letter that said the RFP will not be re-issued in the short term but are looking for other ways to use any remaining IHAP (Interim Housing) funds and inform us. (letter attached to these Minutes)

Comments/questions:

Derek: (Question regarding MAP HWG's letter and recommendations)

Have we ever mentioned single men or LGBTQ before – is this not discriminating?

HWG: It has been discussed before at HWG as it was a priority for at least two housing providers.

Response – we would not select them especially but make sure facilities include their needs.

Brad: *we told the province that there is a need for the funding for capital purposes, but the response has consistently been that money is not for capital projects.*

Is it in the mandate of this Ministry to not fund capital projects but only service-oriented ones?

Response – the IHAP funding was a one-time fund originally pegged for emergency housing to convert units into housing as a one-time injection – this funding was never intended for long term housing creation.

It was created to provide funds for conversion or renovation.

For capital funding you would need to approach another ministry.

Doug – one of the questions was around the possibility of matching funds with another body e.g. BC Housing.

Response: important to realize it cannot include assets: capital funds are for assets, and this would not apply.

Doug – could the asset be transferred to another body or government body?

Response: we would need more information to see how this would work before we could comment.

Doug - Thank you for your explanation.

Can you give some information about what kind of projects the ministry is exploring?

Response: I will ask whether we can share this information but encourage HWG to consider one time use and move on it fast as the money needs to be expended.

Emergency Task Force – Barry Growe

The Task Force is meeting and using Richard's 50-page report as a basis of planning:

- Prioritizing needs – succinct and compact
- Making sure it stays current and is easy to use even after some time.
- Working through a great deal of information that came from the initial survey and report– to shape into a timeline.
- The Plan will be finished at the end of February.
- In the meantime, we will share key messages (QUICK TIPS) if wanted.

You can't learn everything at once –but the tips will help with learning the basics (aka 'Quick Start Guide')

- Jenny added that a Survey has been sent out to 25 original agencies who responded to Richard's first survey.

We have received 9 responses to date but would like to see more. Please ask if you didn't receive the survey and/or would like it.

Survey covers two important questions:

- a) are you seeing more refugee claimants?
- b) what is your capacity to respond? How do you measure this? (refers to Joni's request for trigger points)

Requests for surveys: Nicole (BC Housing), Huda (SVNH)

Question: *Joni asked about responding quicker if numbers climb rapidly.*

Response: the quick tips will help in this scenario, but the planning is not going to be rushed.

CCR Fall Consultation Nov 30 – Dec 3

Jenny Moss described the opportunity to join with others across Canada to discuss issues facing refugee claimants at the Inland Protection meetings and attend workshops.

3 workshops about claimants have been designed here in BC Lower Mainland:

- a) Emergency Planning for an increase in arriving claimants: Barry Growe presenting
- b) Gender issues as they affect refugee hearings: Mariana Martinez V (VAST), Peggy Lee
- c) Results of the CCR survey into remote hearings by the IRB: Sophia (Kinbrace)

(After event: you can listen to recorded workshops through the CCR Consultation Portal)

Expansion of Services to Refugee Claimants

Doug mentioned that he and Marzieh have discussed whether it is appropriate to be discussing the issue around expansion of services for refugee claimants here (at HWG) and now.

Perhaps we need to gather more information to form a baseline and gap analysis first.

Question to HWG:

In order to approach the federal government for more funds to provide the same services for refugee claimants as GAR's: What more do we need to know and how do we find it out?

Joni helped with some of the confusion around the programs: who funds them and how they are structured.

BCSIS is purely provincially funded – should talk to Alex Kang about this.

He will be looking to re-procure this program, so it is good timing to talk to Alex now,

WorkBC is federally funded but managed by the province and includes funding restrictions as to who the programs apply to. Need again to discuss.

Career Paths is funded by both levels of government

STREAM 1: Provincially funded – but no changes possible until next procurement cycle in 5 years.

Need to look at this stream and occupation specific.

STREAM 2/3: Federally funded – falls under settlement terms and conditions and would require a huge change at the federal government in terms of its settlement services.

(Discussion off-record)

Comments:

Mahi – unsure this is the right forum for this discussion. Although the premise is correct that stable employment ensures better settlement including housing, these programs are not designed to provide immediate employment which is what claimants are concerned about and need.

Not appropriate to HWG possibly – better to take to MAP.

Doug suggested a survey at HWG level and discussion with MAP Co-chairs

Marzieh added that any discussion should focus on agencies receiving BCSIS funding as they are most affected.

Consideration of the right platform to discuss this item is important.

The launch of Meanwhile Spaces - Doug with Marzieh taking co-chair facilitation

Good news – Meanwhile Spaces launched funded by the Vancouver Foundation for 2 years.

First housing agreement has been made with Concert Properties – hoping to expand to others of their projects.

Also talking to other developers as well as municipalities.

Ricardo is running the project and Barry is the consultant.

Currently have 6 spaces left to fill – 2- bedroom suites that will be paid for through housing assistance (social assistance housing rates + \$200) Much more affordable than elsewhere.

Also working with ISSofBC to provide some housing and in discussions with MOSAIC and Options to work with us.

How it works: We have formed a separate company wholly owned by Journey Home to be the landlords and assume full responsibility with the families. The families become ‘program participants’ and enter into agreements with settlement agencies who are better able to provide the services they need to be supported.

The suites are available up until June 30

Have already placed 2 families, and in discussion with two single men

6 units left at this point.

Comments:

Joni – don’t forget need for refugee claimants if there is an increase.

Introductions of new members:

Huda Bulbolan – Community Engagement Programmer at South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

Melissa Giles – Project Lead at BC Rent Bank which is a Vancity project funded by the province. It is a homelessness prevention initiative offering microloans to keep people housed – now gone Province wide and are seeing about 10 X applications daily currently.

Meeting adjourned: 2:30 pm

Next meeting: January 27, 2022

- Additional information from Joni Rose re: referral to hotel for newly arrived claimants.

Thanks for your patience while we had our meeting with Stream B providers. As long as the state of emergency for the province related to the flooding is in place and we have access to the IRCC managed hotel, the plan is that ISSofBC (Mahi) will be taking the lead at receiving referrals from IRCC and ensuring the RCs have the services they need, in partnership with MOSAIC. ISSofBC will reach out to the RC housing providers to discuss housing placements. It will be important to maximize the available RC housing spots as the hotel is a last resort and temporary (max 14 day stay). Also to note, only CBSA can make referrals to the hotel.

We would appreciate very much that in this time of emergency and wonderful cooperation with IRCC that this plan be followed.

We will be seeking more clarifications ASAP with IRCC regarding detained refugee claimants and their eligibility for the hotel. Once we have the answers, we will let you know.

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