



Scarborough Housing Help Centre

Newcomers and Housing
December 6, 2011

What are the challenges faced by new immigrants with their housing needs (i.e. the journey that newcomers take in the settlement process with respect to their housing)?

- Lack of a housing plan – short & long-term
- Managing one's expectations (affordability and timing)
- Not knowing the rental housing markets (private and rent-geared-to-income)
- Lack of credit history / guarantor / employment / housing history
- Reference from previous landlord

What are the challenges faced by new immigrants with their housing needs (i.e. the journey that newcomers take in the settlement process with respect to their housing)?

- Rights and responsibilities under Residential Tenancies Act
- Lack of affordable housing stock
- Domestic violence
- Crowding
- Signing lease
- Pressure to be successful

What are the challenges faced by new immigrants with their housing needs (i.e. the journey that newcomers take in the settlement process with respect to their housing)?

- Reliance on own network for information that may be outdated or incorrect
- Language
- Disconnection from community agencies and resources
- Household composition versus affordability
- Landlords that discriminate or are shady (ask for 1 year rent upfront; give hard time for cooking smells, religious beliefs, etc)

When newcomers want to rent an apartment, what is the procedure?

- Procedure is same for everyone
- Ensure that all necessary documents are in order (I.D., reference from previous landlord, guarantor, proof of income)
- Meet with landlord, bring documents, sign and review application, could be asked for cheques, landlord decides whether to rent to applicant & see unit

What is the level of awareness that newcomers have with respect to their rights regarding evictions?

- Limited knowledge of tenant and landlord rights & responsibilities under Residential Tenancies Act
- Language
- Pride
- Need to be connected to settlement services, welcome centres, legal clinics
- May not be aware that information is available online in multiple languages

Are there any findings associated with our project on hidden homelessness?

- Confirmed our understanding that we needed to provide a settlement service that had a housing focus
- The hidden homelessness project was about information dissemination
- Found through literature survey and workshops with staff, newcomers and landlords that many of the challenges and barriers that exist were confirmed to us (i.e. language, family size, understanding different cultural practices, income, educational credentials, abuse & reluctance to come forward, etc).

How are we helping newcomers?

- Settlement services
- Housing help services in Scarborough & Markham
- Rent Bank and Utilities
- To develop a housing plan that is customized to each household
- To learn about rights and responsibilities
- Applications for housing (both general and priority housing applications)
- Advocacy on behalf of clients with income supports and housing providers and referrals to other services (i.e. food banks)

Do we have any partnerships to serve newcomers?

- COSTI Immigrant Services and Citizens for Affordable Housing
- Markham South Welcome Centre
- Toronto Employment and Social Services – Cliffcrest Employment Centre & direct access to newcomers caseloads
- Neighbourhood Information Post
- Numerous community agencies where settlement counselors have delivered workshops

What are the challenges we face with providing services?

- Same as listed in slide 2
- Managing clients' expectations is big!!
- Lack of affordable housing & uncovering hidden housing market
- Waiting list for rent-geared-to-income housing
- Interpretation & translation
- People won't go to shelters
- Lack of eligibility for programs, i.e. rent bank

How do changes (demographic, housing policy or processes and funding) impact our organization?

- Demographic – language capacity of our organization is affected and we may have to rely more on others for translation / interpretation; numerous cases of households with single parent with more than 5 children make it more difficult to find housing; we are serving York Region & there are many people needing assistance
- Housing policy or processes – explaining changes to clients is challenging, particularly when their understanding is often limited; positive changes to waiting list would benefit our clients; legislative rent increases can affect clients' ability to afford rent & it is challenging to help them find other housing; eligibility for programs impact on our ability to help people to find solutions, i.e. rent bank
- Funding – No significant changes for us yet but it creates an uncertain landscape, where the impact of our services will be less if funding is changed