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Greetings from the Chair of the Board of Directors

Greetings,

I am very pleased to welcome you to our 34 AGM of Flemingdon Community Legal Services. It will happen on Thursday September 18th, 2014 in the large room attached inside the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office on the ground floor at 1 Leaside Park Drive. You can enter the building through the FCLS entrance which is located on the west side of the building. There is free parking right beside that entranceway.

The business portion of the meeting will commence at 6:30 followed by a presentation by Rob Devitt, the President and CEO of Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH). He will be speaking on the Future Vision of TEGH. At 7:30 there will be a town hall meeting in the same location. The Town Hall presentation will be on the GTA general service community legal clinics Transformation project. The Vision report on this project is was released to the public during the week of August 25th. Copies of the Executive Summary of the Vision Report will be available at the Town Hall Meeting. Sean Meagher of the consulting firm Public Interest will be giving a presentation and answering questions about the Vision Report.

Membership in FCLS is always encouraged. Membership applications will be available on the night of the AGM. It should be noted that only those who are members at least 10 days prior to the date of the AGM are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting.

All members of the community are most welcome to come and listen to the presentation on the GTA Transformation Project. This project seeks to enhance the quality of service delivery to our community and to increase the number of staff who will provide services to the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our community.

Shamsh Kara
Chair, Board of Directors

Did you know?

FlemServices is accessible by
TTC Buses From:
Pape Subway Station
bus # 25, 81
St. Clair Subway Station
bus # 88 and 88A
Broadview Subway Station
bus # 100, 100A and 100D
Donlands Subway Station
bus # 56
For more info please go to:
www.ttc.ca

Our Satellite Office in Crescent Town

Some of you have been asking about our Satellite Office. Unfortunately, due to an electrical explosion in the Crescent Town Club, the entire Club has been closed down since early July, 2014. As we have been located in the Club, we, too, were compelled to temporarily close. However, we hope to be able to reopen in the Club within the next few weeks in order to better serve those who are living in Crescent Town and the surrounding community. We will then continue our schedule of being in Crescent Town on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month from 6:00 – 8:00pm.

HOUSING CONNECTIONS and WAIT LISTS

Not surprisingly, it seems that Housing Connections (the place where you go to apply for subsidized housing) is synonymous with Wait Lists. There is no mystery in this. The fact is that anyone who applies to Housing Connections for a subsidized or Rent Geared to Income unit can expect to wait years before they are offered a place. Although there are some Special Priority categories which will expedite a placement, the majority of applicants are not eligible for these categories. (The 3 main special priority categories are for: victims of abuse, those who are terminally ill with less than 2 years to live, and over-housed tenants in rent-geared-to-income).

The most recent Annual Report of Housing Connections indicated that as of the end of 2013, there were 77,109 active households on the centralized waiting list. We are often told by people who require subsidized housing that there is no sense applying for subsidized housing because the wait lists are so long. While it is frustrating to wait a long time to be offered a unit, there are a number of factors that affect the amount of time that an applicant waits. Quoting from the Annual Report, "the length of time it takes for an applicant to move off the waiting list depends on many factors, including the area they want to live in, the unit size they need, the number of housing choices they have selected and other housing needs they may have." We generally advise prospective applicants to apply anyway; at least they will be on the waiting list and Housing Connections does sometimes attempt to find ways of expediting housing offers for some applicants. In any event, without applying to Housing Connections for a subsidized unit, the person requiring the subsidy will not get one.

In 2013, Housing Connections helped house 3702 applicants, a small percentage of those on the waiting list. Unfortunately, this reflects the concerns about the lack of affordable rental housing, an issue that has been raised for decades. As this is the kind of issue that affects so many people across Canada, it is frequently argued that the federal government should implement a National Housing Strategy bringing together all of the various players (provincial, municipal, private, non-profits, advocates, etc.) to formulate a plan that might actually begin to address some of these issues. So far, that hasn't happened, but hopefully, as we lead up to a federal election next year, the issue will get the attention it deserves, not just by the governing party, but by the opposition parties as well.

CHANGES TO THE CITIZENSHIP ACT

The Government of Canada is in the process of changing the Citizenship Act.

The new law will make it harder for permanent residents to become citizens. For example the new law:

- Will extend the time you are required to live in Canada before you apply for citizenship
- Will require permanent residents to show intent to stay in Canada as citizens
- Will require more people to show that they have sufficient knowledge of English or French (ages 14 to 64)

Permanent Residents of Canada who have not yet applied for Canadian Citizenship may face difficulties in applying for citizenship when the new law takes effect. The new law will not affect you, if you apply before it comes into force.

Over the coming months, Flemingdon Community Legal Services will assist permanent residents who live in our catchment area with their citizenship applications.

You may be eligible to apply for Canadian Citizenship now:

- IF you are a permanent resident
- You have resided in Canada for three years or more during the last four years (1095 days)

We encourage you and your family to contact our clinic so that we may advise you on your eligibility for Canadian citizenship.

MAINTENANCE ISSUES IN TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING

Most of us have heard about the significant maintenance problems in the units of Toronto Community Housing (TCH). This is nothing new. Back in the 1980s, Flemingdon Community Legal Services, along with several other community legal clinics, took part in a photo exhibit at Queen's Park which showed examples of units that were in a terrible state of disrepair. Since that time, extensive capital repair audits have been done on the TCH buildings which give a disturbing indication of the amount of money required to address the repairs issues in TCH properties.

A recent TCH report states that the TCH housing stock is currently valued at over 9 Billion dollars. The same report acknowledged that TCH will require over **\$2.6 BILLION** over the next decade just to raise the condition of these properties to a reasonable standard. The report goes on to say that, on average, the buildings are more than 42 years old. As these buildings continue to age, the capital repair requirements increase, and in the absence of

sufficient funds to do even the minimum capital repair work required, the buildings will continue to deteriorate and an increasing number of our public housing tenants will find themselves living in neglected, substandard housing, in addition to those that already do.

Toronto Community Housing is limited in its ability to address these significant repair issues without committed stable funding from all levels of government. TCH has been able to secure \$934 million dollars from the City of Toronto over the 10 year period, leaving a shortfall of \$1.72 billion. They have made a concerted effort to approach both the federal and provincial governments to have them commit to providing \$864 million dollars each over the 10 year period. Preserving this housing stock is not only important to ensure that public housing tenants live in quality housing, but it is also necessary to protect a \$9 billion asset that is owned by the state.

Post-Retirement Benefit : A Change to Our Government Pensions: Written by Catherine Manson

Since 2011 the federal government of Canada has introduced a number of changes to the Canada Pension Plan. One of the current changes is the **Post-Retirement Benefit (PRB)**. This benefit affects persons:

- Who are still working between the ages of 60 to 70 years
- Making contributions to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP)
- Receiving a retirement pension from CPP or the Quebec Pension Plan (QPP)

If you are between the ages of 60 and 64 it is mandatory to contribute to the Post Retirement Benefit. This payment is made by you and your employer when you make Canada Pension Plan contributions on each paycheque. If you are self employed you must pay both the employee and employer contributions.

After age 65 the contributions are voluntary and you may chose to stop making these contributions. If you chose to stop these payments, there is a specific "election" form provided by Revenue Canada **you** must fill out to cancel your contributions. If you do not cancel, you continue to make the contributions through your paycheque.

Just like Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan the amount of the benefit is calculated on a percent-age basis depending on the amount of your contributions and number of years you contributed to the plan. The federal government will automatically send you your Post-Retirement Benefit.

The Service Canada website gives an example if one continues to work from age 65 to age 70. The example given is if a person earns \$57,000 for each of those five years the government will pay a pension benefit amount of \$2,042.72 a year up to the time of your death (remember this is an example only based on Service Canada's figures). The pension benefit is for you alone. It cannot be shared with a current spouse or used for credit splitting in a marriage breakup.

The benefit will be added to your normal CPP Retirement benefits and will affect other federal income such the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Please view Service Canada website for more information:

Working and Over the Age of 60 <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/services/pensions/cpp/prb/index.shtml>

**Is Costco coming to
Thorncliffe Park?
(Continued)**

We wrote in the spring edition of the FCLS Newsletter about the pros and cons of a proposed new Costco warehouse store on Overlea Boulevard. It will soon be Fall, and almost a year from the public meeting held in Thorncliffe Park where residents heard about this for the first time. So what's new? Well we don't have a decision, but the old Coca-Cola Canada bottling plant making up a large part of the site has been cleared, leaving the former Coca-Cola Canada Headquarters, a heritage listed building.

So where does this development proposal stand at present? As with any rezoning application there are two phases; City staff analyze the developer's application, and prepare reports to Council, with recommendations. The North York Community Council will make a recommendation to City Council, either agreeing or not with staff recommendations. In this case we understand that the City Manager decided that this application would not go forward before the civic election. It will be dealt with by the new Council in 2015. So at this time we do not know what will be the staff recommendation, and the Council decision will depend on who the electors of Ward 26 elect as Councillor. You will have an opportunity to ask the Ward 26 candidates where they stand on this issue at an All Candidates Meetings to be held within the Ward.

The Board and Staff of
FLEMINGDON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

INVITE YOU TO
**34TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
and
TOWNHALL MEETING**

ON
Thursday, September 18, 2014

BUSINESS MEETING (voting members only) at 6:30 pm
AGM Guest Speaker

Rob Devitt

President and CEO
Toronto East General Hospital

Topic:
The Future Vision of TEGH

TOWNHALL MEETING (open to all) at 7:30 pm
Townhall Guest Speaker

Sean Meagher

Consultant-GTA Transformation Project
Public Interest

Topic:
Changing The Legal Clinic System





LIGHT REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

Location: THORNCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICE (Link Room)
1 Leaside Park Drive Unit 1 (accessible from FCLS Entrance)

RSVP by September 15, 2014

Tel: 416-441-1764 x22 or by email: kalayjid@lao.on.ca

There are plans for a Thorncliffe Park meeting with the date to be determined. You may wish to call our legal clinic in the coming days for further information regarding the time and place for the All Candidates Meeting in Thorncliffe Park. This is an important issue for the local residents so the All Candidates Meeting is an opportunity for residents to ask the candidates their position on bringing Costco into Thorncliffe Park.

