

Friday, October 15, 2021

Chair and Members,
General Government and Licensing Committee
Attn: Mathew Green, Committee Secretary
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

Dear Chair Ainslie and Members of Committee:

**Request to approve 5N2 Food for All, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians,
and South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC) for below market rents
at 705 Progress Avenue as part of Item #GL26.7**

As a former City Councillor for Scarborough Centre – and the current volunteer Chair of SAAAC – I encourage you to provide support to the charities, listed above, who have applied to the City to receive below-market rent at 705 Progress Avenue as well as support the recommendations submitted by all three charities.

As a City Councillor in this area for 15 years, I – and Toronto Council - supported every charity that requested space at this City/TDSB 10-acre site. Council supported the following charities:

- Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre
- Feral Cat Recovery Centre
- South Asian Autism Awareness Centre
- Warden Woods Community 24-Hour Respite Centre
- City of Toronto Men's Shelter (Seaton House/George Street Revitalization)

I am requesting that Councillors vote in favour of helping all the charities that are applying for space at 705 Progress, including both Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association (recommended by staff in Report GL26.7) and the following charities:

- 5N2 Food For All
- Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (including partners Punjabi Health Services and South Asian Legal Services)
- South Asian Autism Awareness Centre

It is my belief the City-owned buildings, sitting on City-owned land that was purchased with taxpayer dollars, should prioritize local charities which provide essential services to our marginalized, racialized and underserved communities in Scarborough. The many fine commercial businesses located at 705 Progress can be located anywhere – across the street, down the street, on Ellesmere or Lawrence or Middlefield or Comstock or any of the hundreds of acres of industrial and commercial plazas located in Scarborough. Our charities have few, if any, alternatives due to the financial challenges they face.

It is also my belief that using the 705 Progress Reserve Account XR2007 to help charities upgrade the old buildings is an appropriate use of the reserve, and Toronto Council seems to agree as my motions in 2017 to allocate approximately \$1.1 million to undertake renovations at the original SAAAC units was approved by Toronto Council. I also believe that our request for the City to allocate funds from this reserve account to create an accessible playground at 705 is keeping with the 705 Reserve account objectives, which include funding public recreational purposes. The investments to repair and renovate the old units stay with the units, not the charities. Most repairs cannot be ripped out and moved; things like doors, walls and toilets will stay in the city building, as will things like: electrical work, ceilings, drywall, millwork, plumbing, flooring, sprinklers and accessible ramps, doors and washrooms.

Finally, I urge Committee members to support all motions put forward by our charities, including motion #4 that requests City staff to follow-up on a motion I passed in 2017 requesting a report back to committee on creating a community hub at 705 Progress and motion #6 directing staff to create a master plan for this site in partnership with the TDSB that will maximize the public benefit of the land the City owns.

Our one charity helps hundreds of special needs children as well as their siblings, parents, grandparents, and caregivers. Together, if you approve our request, the charities at 705 Progress could be helping thousands and thousands of the most vulnerable people in Scarborough.

If you have any questions regarding my submission, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Cheers,

Glenn De Baeremaeker
Volunteer Chair
South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC)

P.S. I have included a portion of the joint letter submitted on behalf of three charities requesting support for obtaining space at 705 Progress Avenue below:

Report GL26.7 recommends granting below-market rent at the City/TDSB owned 705 Progress Avenue property to Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association charity as part of the City's below market rent program. The approval will allow Carefirst Seniors Association to utilize approximately 6,600 sq ft. of space at 705 Progress for its charitable purposes and we are in full support of the approval.

SAAAC alongside the charities listed above [5N2 Food for All and Council of Agencies Serving South Asians] are asking Committee and Council to adopt the following additional recommendations as part of Item #GL26.7 for the City/TDSB owned property at 705 Progress Avenue:

- 1.) Approve an additional 6,000 sq ft of space for the 5N2 Food for All charity, an additional 6,000 sq ft for the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, and an additional 10,000 sq ft of space for the South Asian Autism Awareness Centre, as part of the City's below-market rent program as soon as space becomes available at the property.
- 2.) Approve a grant allocation of \$450,000 to 5N2 Food for All to undertake renovations and create a proper food preparation area and allocate \$400,000 to the City's Park Department to build an accessible playground at 705 Progress, with funding coming unallocated funds from Reserve Account XR2007.
- 3.) Request staff allocate additional grants to charities moving into 705 Progress (as part of the below-market rent program) to help them renovate the facilities, as funds from Reserve Account XR2007 become available, and examine other ways to support charities utilizing 705 Progress, to the satisfaction of Deputy City Manger, Corporate Services.
- 4.) Request staff follow-up on the May 24, 2017, Toronto Council request (CD20.8) to report on the feasibility of establishing a community hub at 705 Progress to the General Government and Licensing Committee in the first quarter of 2022.
- 5.) Request the co-owner of 705 Progress, the Toronto District School Board, to also waive their portion of rental fees applied to the charities at 705 Progress that are part of the City's below-market-rent program.
- 6.) Request the Toronto and District School Board work together with the City of Toronto to create a master development plan for 705 Progress, along with any Official Plan and/or Zoning amendments which may be necessary, that would allow a mixed-use development to take place at the site, including a new school, a permanent community hub for local charities, at least two new condo towers that would include an affordable housing component, and a large park area, and report back to Scarborough Community Council in the second quarter of 2022.

We believe our charities provide essential services to the Scarborough community and to groups that have traditionally been underserved. With your help, we believe we can make Scarborough – and the City of Toronto – an even more wonderful place to live than it is today.

Please feel free to reach out to any one of us if you have any questions regarding our request.

Sincerely,

5N2 Food For All, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, South Asian Autism Awareness Centre