



Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)
5200 Finch Avenue East, Suite 301A
Scarborough ON, M1S 4Z5
Phone: 416-932-1359
E-mail: cassa@cassa.on.ca Website: www.cassa.on.ca

Monday, October 19, 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 for below market rents at 705 Progress Avenue as part of Item #GL26.7

On behalf of the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), please accept this letter as our support for the staff recommendations in Report GL26.7: Community Space Tenancy Lease Agreement at 705 Progress Avenue as well as our request for the General Government and Licensing Committee to support additional motions that will help local charities serve marginalized, racialized, and underserved communities in Scarborough.

CASSA is a social justice agency serving the South Asian communities living in Ontario through advocacy, research, capacity building, policy development, and training. CASSA is structured as an umbrella agency of over 120 member agencies (list in Appendix A) serving South Asian communities in Ontario. The direct beneficiaries of our work are the member agencies that provide frontline community services to South Asian communities, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of our work. The focus of our work is on marginalized, underprivileged, and disenfranchised segments of the South Asian communities including youth, women, seniors, disabled, poverty stricken, and LGBTQ+ groups.

CASSA's mission is to empower South Asians and act as a resource for capacity building, training, research, and information for any matter of relevance to the South Asian communities. CASSA's current strategic directions are: Anti-racism & anti-oppression, poverty reduction, health equity, women empowerment, and supporting immigration and settlement. Since CASSA is not a frontline serving agency, we work on influencing policy and research in these five areas. Most of our member agencies serving marginalized communities are resource strapped in providing employment, health, language, legal, recreational, and other necessary services. They do not have the resources, capacity or time to develop tools on best practices, or advocate for greater resource allocation to adequately serve their communities.

CASSA applied for the below market rent tenancy opportunity at 705 Progress with the Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) and the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO) as subtenants to start a South Asian Community Hub with various services to meet the needs of



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South Asians living in Toronto. These services include:

1. Mental Health and Addictions Support
 - Counselling and addictions treatment for teenagers and parents. Certified counsellors will meet with clients for one-on-one counselling.
 - Offering free counselling and treatment for at risk youth and families to ensure mental health is promoted and supported.
2. Support for South Asian Seniors
 - Programs include “Meals on Wheels” for frail seniors, support with medical appointments, support with grocery delivery
 - Nutritious food, culturally tailored food is delivered to seniors to promote food security. Support seniors with booking and transportation to medical appointments.
3. Recreational and Cultural Programming for Youth
 - Culturally tailored recreational and vocational programming for South Asian youth including community kitchens for the LGBTQ community
 - Activities scheduled to promote physical activity amongst at-risk youth.
4. Legal Aid for low-income South Asians
 - Free legal services for low income South Asian families and youth.
5. Leadership and Community Development Training
 - Culturally and linguistically tailored training workshops to develop skills of South Asian immigrants.
 - Leadership and career advancement workshop offered to the newcomer and immigrant South Asian communities including translated materials on programs and services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many inequities faced by racialized communities in Canada. Through preliminary collection of race-based data in health care and by Statistics Canada, we have seen many inequities in South Asian communities. As a social justice advocacy organization representing the interest of over 120 South Asian-serving organizations in Ontario, we have been forced to play the role of the advocate and voice for the interest and well-being of South Asians. To close gaps in food security, services for seniors, housing and homelessness, and health, CASSA expanded its work threefold in the last 18 months. We have evidence which indicates significant need for our advocacy, research and policy work. However, with expansion, there needs to be resources dedicated for stability and sustainability.

In partnership with our member agencies, CASSA intends to use the community space as a Hub model, with services specialized for South Asians in Scarborough. As the Community Hub for the diverse South Asian Communities in Scarborough and surrounding areas, especially meant to support the equity seeking/deserving sections of our community, this space will provide a one-stop location for information, community and health services, social innovation, community collaboration, cross-cultural knowledge exchange and partnership development. A large majority of the residents in the Scarborough-Guildwood area are



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racialized, a large proportion of which are South Asians. We know that there are service gaps and South Asians in Toronto face inequitable access to culturally appropriate and linguistically tailored services. We hope to lessen this gap by establishing the South Asian Community Hub at 705 Progress.

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.

CASSA alongside the charities listed below 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



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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 and not-for-profit organizations 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 if you have any questions regarding our request.

Sincerely,

Samya Hasan

Executive Director

Council of Agencies Serving South Asians

samya@cassa.on.ca

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Appendix A: CASSA Member and Partner Agencies

1. 905 Women for Women Support Services
2. Abhinayakshetra Fine Arts Canada
3. Afghan's Women's Organization
4. Afghan Association of Ontario
5. Armadale Older Adults Club
6. Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)
7. Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services (BCS)
8. Bangladesh Centre & Community Services
9. Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Center
10. Brampton Tamil Association
11. Brampton Tamil Seniors
12. Canada Sri Sabarimala Iyappan
13. Canadian Aids Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE)
14. Canadian Breast Cancer Society
15. Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)
16. Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture
17. Canadian Pakistani Association of Scarborough
18. Canadian Tamil Chamber of Commerce
19. Canadian Tamil Congress
20. Canadian Tamil Youth alliance
21. CANTYD
22. Carefirst Foundation
23. CATIE
24. CAW Canada
25. Cedarwood Tamil Community Association Ratepayers
26. Centennial College Employment Services
27. Centre for Community Learning & Development
28. CICS - Centre for Information and Community Services of Ontario 24. Community Environment Alliance
29. Community Legal Clinic of York Region
30. Community Resource Development Organization of York Region
31. COSTI Immigrant Services
32. Crescent Village Housing Corporation (Jafari Islamic Housing Corporation)
33. Durham Tamil Association
34. Epilepsy Toronto
35. Evergreen Hospice
36. Family Inter-Generation Link (FIG Link)
37. Family Service Toronto
38. Family Services of York Region
39. Findhelp



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40. Frontline Community Services
41. Golden Years Seniors Stouffville
42. Greenborough Tamil Seniors Wellness Club
43. Human Endeavour
44. Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning - Centre for Human Rights, Equity & Diversity
45. InCharge Canada
46. Indo Canadian Cultural Association of Durham
47. Interim Place
48. J.R.S. College
49. Job Skills
50. Labour Education Center
51. Loxley Foundation
52. Mannar Friendship Association
53. Markham Arts Council
54. Markham Christian Worship Centre
55. Markham Cricket Academy
56. Markham South Asian Seniors
57. Markham Tamil Organization
58. Markham Tamil Seniors
59. Markham Tamil Seniors Association Canada
60. MCIS Interpretation Services
61. Menaka Thakkar Dance Company
62. METRAC - Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children
63. Middlefield Seniors Wellness Club
64. Millennium Motorist Foundation of Canada
65. Muslim Kidney Project, UHN Kidney Health Education and Research Group 62. Neighbourlink North York
66. Nepalese Canadian Community Services
67. Newcomer Women's Services Toronto (NEW)
68. Ontario Bengali Cultural Society
69. Ontario Seniors Tamil Center
70. Pak Seniors Forum (PSF)
71. People for Education
72. Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services
73. Progressive Action for Community Empowerment (PEACE)
74. Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS)
75. Radio Metro Mail
76. Punjabi Community Health Services - PCHS
77. Rehma Community Services
78. Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
79. RWDSW/UFCW
80. Sandgate Women Shelter



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81. Scadding Court Community Centre
82. Scarborough Arts
83. Scarborough Women's Centre
84. Schizophrenia Society of Ontario
85. School of Continuing Studies, University of Toronto
86. Service Employees International Union
87. Sheetal Sangeet
88. Sherbourne Health Centre
89. Sindhi Association of North America - Canada
90. Skills for Change
91. South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC)
92. Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services (SAFSS)
93. South Asian COVID-19 Task Force
94. South Asian Network Supporting Awareness & Research (SANSAR)
95. South Asian Heart Health Group (SAHHG)
96. South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)
97. South Asian Visual Arts Centre
98. South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC)
99. South Asian Women's Rights Organization (SAWRO)
100. South Riverdale Community Health Centre
101. Social Planning Toronto
102. Springtide Resources Inc.
103. Social Services Network
104. Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham
105. Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action
106. TESOC Multicultural Settlement Services
107. Tetrault Arts Productions
108. Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action (TCCCA)
109. Thamil Poonka
110. The Elizabeth Fry Society
111. The Neighbourhood Organization - TNO
112. Times Change Women's Employment Service
113. Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation
114. Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival
115. Toronto Support Services
116. Tropicana Employment Center
117. United Food and Commercial Workers
118. University Health Network - Kidney Health Education Group
119. Vasantham (Tamil Seniors Wellness Centre)
120. Villa Karuna Home for Seniors
121. We Can Win
122. Wellfort Community Health Services
123. Women's Health in Women's Hands



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124. Worker's Action Centre

125. York Region Social Planning Council