

## Toronto Star apologizes for making false allegation



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The Toronto Star has apologized for publishing false information about a \$250,000 grant Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration gave to COSTI Immigrant Services and the Bengali Cultural Society to bring much-needed services to the Bangladeshi and other South Asian families in the Crescent Town area of Beaches-East York.

The grant will help purchase, renovate and furnish a building near Danforth and Victoria Park from which services can be provided for immigrant families in the Crescent Town area. The local South Asian community is in the process of raising approximately \$150,000 in order to complete the acquisition.

An article published in the Toronto Star on April 19, 2007, falsely stated that the president of the Bengali Cultural Society was the vice-president of the Beaches-East York Federal Liberal Association.

The Star ran this correction the following day:

### **Head of cultural society not in riding association**

The president of the Bengali Cultural Society, Farhana Rahman, is not the vice-president of the federal riding association in Beaches-

East York, as mistakenly stated in yesterday's story about a provincial grant given to the society. She is not a member of the riding association but is a card-carrying member of the Liberal party. The *Star* regrets the error.

Not only is Ms. Rahman not a member of the Beaches-East York Federal Liberal Association, neither she nor any other member of the board of the Bengali Cultural Society has ever been involved in the election campaigns of Hon. Maria Minna, Member of Parliament for Beaches-East York.

"It is most unfortunate that the media turned this into a partisan issue by falsely claiming that the Bengali Cultural Society got the grant because of alleged ties to the Liberal party," Ms. Minna said today. "What is important here is providing much needed services such as settlement counselling, women's support services and youth services to name a few. There was no need for the media to make false allegations about alleged Liberal ties. The community has to come first."

Crescent Town is one of 13 priority communities identified by the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto as a "high need" community. The community is a high-density area with a large number of immigrants and very little in the way of settlement support services.

Contrary to false reports in the media, there is broad and enthusiastic support for the project that is being put together by COSTI Immigrant Services and the Bengali Cultural Society.

Among the groups that support this initiative are:

Bangladesh Showcase, Bangladesh Society of Canada, Barishal Club of Toronto, Canada and Bangladesh Business Council, Canada and Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce, Canada and Bangladesh Trade Promotion Centre, Chittagong Association of Canada Inc., Chittagong University Alumni, Dhaka University Forum, Hindu Cultural Society, Khulna Club of Toronto, Probashi Nagorik Committee and Udichi Canada.

These organizations are confident in the ability of the Bengali Cultural Society – in partnership with COSTI Immigrant Services – to meet the pressing needs of the Bangladeshi and other South Asian families in the Crescent Town Area and to create something of lasting value.

The joint proposal from COSTI Immigrant Services and the Bengali Cultural Society said: "The location will be highly visible, highly accessible and will serve as a hub for community development, dialogue and service delivery. The location can immediately be used for community meetings, cultural events, offices for the Bengali Cultural Society, workshops and other services. In the

near future, we anticipate that resources can be leveraged to provide settlement and other services.”

The proposal also said: “COSTI is interested in supporting the community to establish needed services such as settlement counselling, women’s support services and youth services, to name a few. We believe that the Bengali Cultural Society is in a position, with our support, to build the capacity to develop and deliver services that are relevant and responsive to local community needs. We are also confident that resources can be leveraged from various sources to support this development.”

COSTI has more than 50 years of experience in immigrant settlement and serves about 50,000 clients a year – in more than 60 languages – from 13 locations across the Greater Toronto Area.

While the Bengali Cultural Society is a relatively small group with no experience in settlement services, they agreed to expand their board of directors to better reflect the broader South Asian community and they also agreed to work in partnership with COSTI Immigrant Services.

This is the same model that Maria Minna used to help establish the Neighbourhood Link Employment Resource Centre/40 plus program which recently relocated from Danforth and Main to Danforth and Victoria Park and has served more than 100,000 individuals.

That program did not even exist 11 years ago — despite the fact that the overall unemployment rate was at 11.5 per cent and, for our youth, the figure was more than 20 per cent.

Maria Minna brought the need for an employment resource centre to the attention of the leadership of Senior Link, a truly remarkable organization dedicated to improving the lives of seniors in our area. However, they did not have any experience or expertise in employment resources.

At Maria Minna’s request, COSTI’s senior management team gladly joined the effort and became a full partner and, working closely with the senior staff at Human Resources Development Canada, the foundation was laid for what is now recognized as one of the most successful employment resource programs in Ontario.

“We’re doing pretty much the same thing in establishing a settlement services organization for the Bangladeshi and other South Asian communities in the Crescent Town area,” Ms. Minna said today.

“COSTI and the Bengali Cultural Society – with its new, expanded, board – are working out a basic partnership agreement and developing a short- and longer-term plan of action.

“Meanwhile, the Bengali Cultural Society is identifying an appropriate building in which to locate the service providers.

“I will continue to work with the new organization and provide to them the benefit of my more than 30 years of experience in community development.”