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Report From the Board Chair

At Scarborough Housing Help Centre, our mission is to assist individuals and families living in Scarborough and neighbouring communities with securing housing, and to provide them with the necessary services so they are able to maintain their housing and thereby improve the quality of their lives.

A very pressing issue for the Scarborough area is a large number of “hidden homeless” people.

Many people move from place to place, relying on an informal network of relatives and friends to find floor space, couches – even closets – to sleep in. Families double and triple up in order to reside in overcrowded accommodations.

Scarborough and its neighbour to the north, Markham, are also the first places of settlement for a wide variety of immigrants to Toronto.

In keeping with our goal to provide housing help and other types of support services to our northern neighbours, I’m very pleased to announce that in 2009,

we were able to roll out our first funded program in Markham; a project which provides housing related information to immigrant seniors isolated by cultural and linguistic barriers, so they are able to make informed decisions about housing options in their community.

We were able to provide this service with funding acquired from the Trillium Foundation.

It was also a positive and productive year for the Board of Directors, as we continued to refine our new governance model and increased Board capacity with the addition of several new members. It gives me much pleasure to welcome Nisha Nagaratnam, Niluka Williams and Ray Persaud to the slate of new directors for the coming year.

It is with regret that I announce Korrie Silver is not standing for re-election to the Board. Korrie is one of our longest serving members and has been with us for seven years.

Over that time, she assumed several leadership roles, in-

cluding that of vice-chair, and was personally responsible for the recruitment of many new Board members. Korrie’s articulate contributions and sense of humour will be missed at Board meetings, and we offer our gratitude for her many contributions to SHHC.

We also offer an appreciative thank you to the City of Toronto, The United Way of Greater Toronto and our other funding and service providers for their continued support of our commitment to ensuring Scarborough is a great community.

In closing, I offer my own personal thanks to Gopi and his team of staff and volunteers for another productive year, and for being the ones who make the agency what it is day in and day out, and to the Board members who donate so much of their time and skills to SHHC.

I look forward to seeing what adventures await us in 2010!

**Terry Harris, Chairman
Board of Directors**

SHHC's
programs
make the
dream of
"Home
Sweet
Home"
feasible in
Scarborough.

Message From the Executive Director



Respected Guests, Community Members, Funders and Colleagues,

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of Scarborough Housing Help Centre (SHHC) for 2009.

Notwithstanding Canada's emerging relatively unscathed from last year's global recession, many home-owners were forced to reconsider their housing options and move into cheaper, rental housing.

When the demand for cheaper housing is juxtaposed with Scarborough's reputation for affordable rental properties, it is easy to see why SHHC was flooded with requests for assistance- we felt honoured, humbled, challenged and validated by the increased in demands for our service.

To respond to the aforementioned quantitative and qualitative changes, the agency had to rapidly develop the capacity to respond to the new challenges- it increased programming, forged new partnerships, reached out to new communities, accessed new resources and adopted a new staff structure through the creation of a middle tier of management.

The agency's reputation for high quality, innovative programming resulted in requests for services in the neighbouring community of Markham; the increased capacity made it possible for us to respond positively to the request. Through a grant from the Trillium Foundation, we started an information dissemination program for newcomer seniors isolated by linguistic and cultural barriers.

Homelessness, we found, does not discriminate between communities - it manifests itself as "hidden homelessness" in Scarborough, Markham and other suburban communities. When families or individuals crowd into dwellings, the resulting

quality of life is no different from that of a homeless individual- even with a roof over the head.

This manifestation of homelessness is frequently eclipsed by discussions of "absolute homelessness" or people living rough.

SHHC's efforts to draw attention to this issue were rewarded through invitations for presentations at various forums and conferences and requests to contribute articles in journals- SHHC's valiant efforts have resulted in the organization's earning the sobriquet of "Champions Against Hidden Homelessness".

SHHC's programs - The Housing Help, Rent Bank, Eviction Prevention, Landlord Outreach and Winter Hot Breakfast programs make the dream of "Home Sweet Home" feasible in Scarborough.

The Streets to Homes program continues to transform the lives of clients by helping them to realize goals and achieve greater independence.

The impact of our Community Outreach programs is best gauged by the publicity received in the media and requests for expanding our services to Markham.

This wonderful and rewarding journey progresses because of the inspiration provided by community, volunteers and funders. We thank all our supporters profusely and renew our request for continued support.

S.Gopikrishna
Executive Director

Housing Help



House in Scarborough.

Our Housing Help program assists clients to identify, access and maintain housing in Scarborough.

While rent-g geared-to-income housing (RGI) is highly sought, our counsellors strongly encourage clients to look at market rental accommodation

whenever possible. This is due to the lengthy RGI waiting list.

As one of the eight housing help centres funded by the City of Toronto, SHHC worked with more than 900 clients in 2009.

We serve clients including youth, families, and seniors from a variety of backgrounds, whose common interest is to find a comfortable and affordable place to call home.

Once someone is housed, our counsellors maintain contact with them for upwards of six months. During this time, we help them settle into their new neighbourhoods, mediate disputes with landlords, and stabilize their tenancy.

Our counsellors' caseloads are rising quickly and this places demands on the services they perform.

With the economic recession causing job loss and financial hardships for our clients over the past year, our counsellors rose to the occasion. We explored viable options and provided information that helped them to restore a positive outlook for the future.

Rent Bank



This program serves individuals, couples, seniors and families with children living in Toronto with legal status in Canada.

Its purpose is to provide people with interest-free loans when they have accrued rental arrears.

Anyone wishing to participate in this program must first meet a number of eligibility criteria. These

include having a regular source of income, living in market rent accommodation, and the ability to afford the rent in the long term.

Clients who need help with first and last months' rent can apply as well.

As one of the Local Access Centres, SHHC meets with clients to process applications

through Neighbourhood Information Post.

Other facets of the program include preparing clients for Landlord-Tenant Board hearings and helping people to regain housing after being evicted. In many cases, our program has helped to prevent eviction applications from being filed.

In 2009, our Rent Bank program helped 280 households to access loans, including 23 urgent cases. Due to the economic recession, there was a steady increase of clients seeking support.

Streets to Homes



This program works with clients that have long histories of being absolutely homeless—in other words, people who live outdoors under bridges, on park benches, and in ravines.



The City of Toronto refers these clients, mostly men, to SHHC after they have been housed. Our workers meet with the referring agency and client to complete a transfer that allows us to begin identifying goals and working towards reaching them.

Many of our clients face challenges related to mental and physical health, substance use, social isolation and income difficulties. The objective is to help them remain housed and to provide support through home visits for one year (possibly longer depending on an individual's need).

Our support workers helped 40 clients in 2009

Staff worked with 40 clients in 2009 and helped a large majority of them to keep their housing. Our agency began developing a partnership with Toronto Community Housing Corporation in order to work towards preventing evictions and addressing concerns around community safety.

Our holiday dinner event in December was very successful and we look forward to more positive developments in 2010.

Eviction Prevention

SHHC helped close to 300 households in 2009 to keep their utilities connected.

There are two grant programs that are available to assist clients who have difficulty paying their hydro and gas bills.

Each serves low-income families and individuals living at or below the poverty line and who have used all other financial measures.

The first is called **Winter Warmth (WW)**. Sponsored by a number of utility companies, it is coordinated by several agencies, including SHHC and runs from November through May. Clients may apply once per year.

The second program is the **Emergency Energy Fund (EEF)**, which is administered through

Employment and Social Services. Clients can apply one time during their lives.

Eligible households include low-income residents who are not receiving social assistance and have received a disconnection notice or who are already without a utility.

SHHC staff meet with clients to process applications for either WW or EEF. Having personal identification when applying ensures that there are no delays. WWF has a pool of money that runs out sometime in May, so it is advisable that clients do not wait too long. EEF has no such timeline.

In 2009, SHHC served 272 households within Winter Warmth and 89 within the Emergency Energy Fund programs.

Future funding may not be possible with WW, but we will continue to help clients to find solutions for their utility bills nonetheless.



Tuesday Drop-In



With no appointment necessary, clients can come each Tuesday morning to SHHC's drop-in program, which is offered between 9:00-11:00.

Clients meet with housing counselors to complete applications that are sent to Housing Connections.

Housing listings are available, since the current waiting list is several years long.

This program serves a wide-ranging client population, including seniors, newcomers and young families.

Often people come with complex cases that require follow-up appointments with counselors.

The program has been helpful to those living in abusive situations or who are terminally ill, by assisting them with priority applications. This has lessened the wait time and gives people

more hope.

In 2009, the drop-in served 739 clients and made innumerable referrals to other community agencies.



Hot Breakfast

With funding support through the United Way of Toronto's Winter Relief grant, the Hot Breakfast had another successful season in 2009.

The breakfast includes eggs, toast, pancakes, sausages, coffee, tea and juice. More importantly, it provides a comfortable atmosphere where people experiencing social

isolation can enjoy good camaraderie.

Participants of this program are invited to seek support from other services within SHHC, particularly around housing.

Since many of the clients are homeless or at high risk of losing their housing, they are in a better position to gain knowledge that will help them

in the long run.

In 2009, 514 breakfasts were served during the winter months, which shows how much this program is needed.



**Breakfast
always tastes
great at SHHC.**

Landlord Outreach



Any housing provider wishing to list their units with us may do so at no cost.

SHHC has been active in connecting with landlords, gaining 82 new contacts to our database during 2009.

Since the waiting list for subsidized housing is so lengthy, we have strived to obtain listings that fall under the private market and are reasonably priced for our clients.

We have disseminated legislative information to landlords to help ensure that their units are compatible within the City of Toronto's requirements.

Any housing provider wishing to list their units with us may do so at no cost. Whenever possible, we may match up clients to vacant units.

Should disputes arise between landlords and tenants, we are there to mediate.

In cases where disputes or discrimination have occurred, SHHC has used this as an opportunity to remain proactive and educate landlords whenever possible.

Units typically available include rooms, bachelors and basements in houses, low and high-rise buildings.

We look forward to extending our network of housing providers into 2010 and beyond.

Community Outreach



Cindy Wu being interviewed by OMNI Television

Our outreach worker conducts workshops in Markham and Scarborough about our housing services and how to apply for subsidized housing.

Workshops are facilitated in both English and Chinese within a variety of community settings.

It is only through generous funding from Trillium and HRSDC's New Horizons for Seniors that SHHC was able to provide this service.

In 2009, a total of 51 workshops were held during which 780 individuals attended.

Building knowledge capacity regarding housing information is the main focus of this program.

Clients are typically seniors who are isolated due to cultural and linguistic barriers.

Market rent housing, tenants' rights and re-

sponsibilities and access to affordable housing are all hallmarks of this service.

Our outreach staff was interviewed as part of a broadcast on OMNI television, providing insider knowledge about housing information.