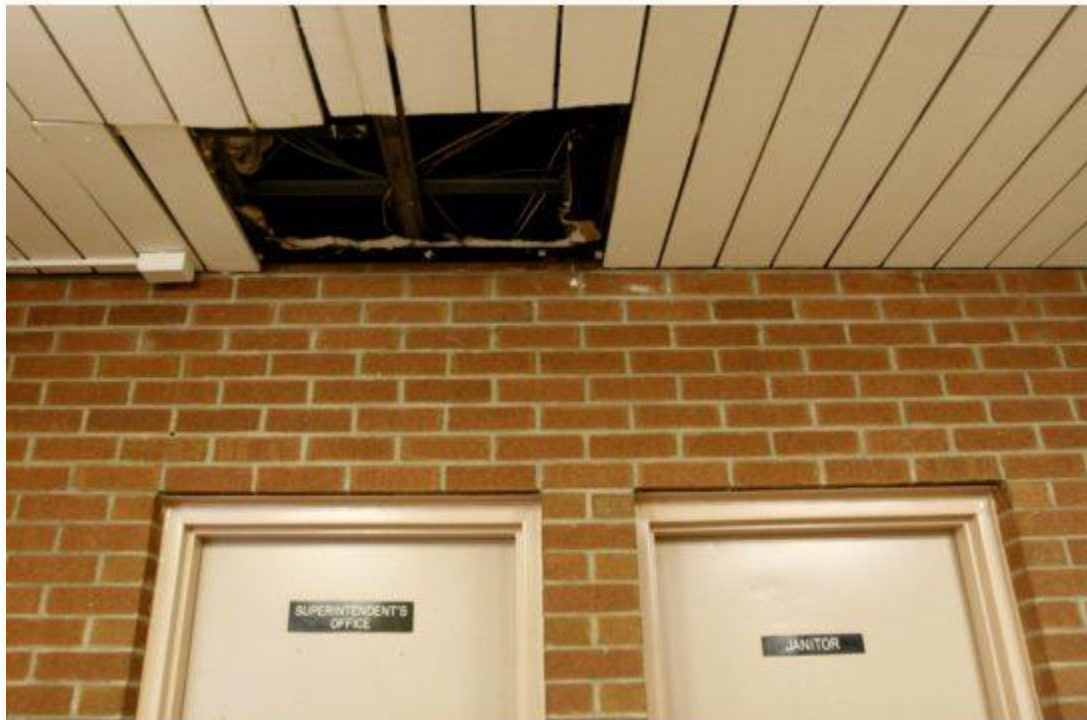


Can we get some damn repairs: Fiorito

A TCHC lowrise on Lawrence Ave. E. is a disaster just waiting to happen, Joe Fiorito writes.



Tory Zimmerman / The Toronto Star File Photo

The Toronto Community Housing Corp. has been tackling a mountain of repairs. Much still needs to be done.

By: [Joe Fiorito](#) Columnist, Published on Fri Nov 29 2013, Toronto Star

A corona of pale light circles the Toronto Community Housing Corp. of late, but the company is still a [black hole of problems](#).

Acsana is a friend of a friend and she lives in a TCHC complex on Lawrence Ave. E., near Orton Park Rd., so far east that there are dragons in the margins of the map.

She shares an apartment with her father and her brother in a lowrise, next to a highrise. She showed me around on a recent evening.

The first problem was immediately apparent: There is no security; the door is unlocked, and anyone can just wander in any time they like.

She noted a second problem as we passed the laundry room. “There is one washer. It doesn’t work. There is one dryer. It doesn’t work. There are nine families here.” How does she do her laundry? “We have to go next door and wait at the highrise until someone comes out, so that we can get in and use their machines.”

They have to wait because — good news for the people who live in the highrise — you need a key fob to gain entry, unless someone sees you have a load of whites.

We went upstairs to her unit and she pointed to the kitchen counter by the stove. It is coming away from the wall and the doors and drawers are not flush. She said, “Here is access for mice and everything.”

She sees, and she traps a lot of mice; cockroaches also. Her place is spotless.

I asked about her brother and her father. “My brother is at therapy.” Her brother has an unceasing migraine, for which there is no relief, not even for an instant. “And my dad went to his diabetes workout class.”

I was curious about the family story.

“We are from Bangladesh. I’m 33 years old. In 2002, I moved here as a refugee.” Why did she come as a refugee? “My dad is Muslim, my mom is Catholic; people didn’t accept that. We were always poorly treated.

“I was going to missionary school. I was doing translation, interpretation. I was also working in a factory interpreting for the buyers. There was a gang nearby. I was threatened sexually. I had to hide.

“We found the money and I got a visa and landed in the States in December of 2001.”

And she paused, and I pressed her, and she said, “In February of 2002, they burned the hut my family was living in. My dad was able to rescue my brother.”

Her mother died in the fire.

Don’t you love religious zeal?

She got her Canadian status in 2003; at the time, she didn’t know if her father and her brother were still alive. When she learned that they had survived the fire, she sponsored her brother in 2005, and her father in 2009.

Back to the apartment.

“The mice? I trap two or three a week. The cockroaches are a constant battle. There is also a crazy noise at night, like something passing in a tunnel. It happens three times a night, between midnight and 6 a.m. or 7 a.m. My dad can’t sleep.”

Her dad, as you might imagine, is still bothered by the memory of what happened in Bangladesh.

There are more problems, some minor and some major, including ongoing trouble with the baseboard heaters. She has filed work orders time and again.

No action; nothing, nil, nada.

But for Acsana, and for the other women in the buildings, there is a more serious problem than vermin, noise, laundry and heat:

“There is no security in the garage. The main door has been open for three months. People are doing their car repairs; it’s dirty. The cellphone doesn’t work down there, and people are approaching us. Last month, a woman got mugged; they took her purse.”

If anything more serious than a mugging were to happen, you can bet there would be grounds for a lawsuit. Word to the wise, or to the people reading the work orders:

Repairs cost less than lawsuits.

[More from Joe Fiorito](#)END

Joe Fiorito appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday. jfiorito@thestar.ca