

ICC Meeting – June 30, 2015

Attendees

1. Behrouz Amouzgar
2. Bijan Ahmadi
3. Soudeh Ghassemi
4. Mitra Saffari
5. Arsalan Kahnemui pour
6. Reza Ghazi
7. Arshak Shojai
8. Shahram Namvarazad

Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes of the June 24 Meeting
2. Brief facebook post on Canada Day
3. Items tabled in last meeting:
 - Motion 4: Federal Election
 - Motion 5: Bill C 24 & C51
 - Supporting Tirgan Festival
 - E-mail from three Iranian Canadian NGOs
 - E-mail from Ahmad Amiri
4. Follow-up from previous meetings:
 - Mostafa Azizi
 - Masoud Hajivand
 - Maryam Rashidi
 - Standing Committees
 - Operations Plan
 - NYCC rooms for meetings
 - Membership surveys
5. Advisory – Committee
6. Membership update
7. Creation of ICC facebook group for discussion
8. Using survey monkey for e-motions
9. Request for updated financial statement
10. Adjournment

1. Minutes of Meetings & Circulation

Discussion:

A number of board members had requested revisions to the minutes of the previous meetings and while some revisions were minimal, some board members had requested extensive revisions to the minutes beyond what is typical for such revisions.

Arsalan Kahnemuyipour provided that Behrouz Amouzgar has been preparing detailed minutes of the meetings but these minutes should not be used as a placeholder for the board members to include lengthy statements that may not even have been were not delivered during the meetings.

Mr. Amouzgar provided that revisions to minutes should not be a place for people to include speeches that they had not given at the meeting.

In response, Mitra Saffari stated that we should use our intellectual skills as a gift to our organization and ensure that they do not result in any discrimination or disadvantage. She regretted that the minutes of meetings have turned to a place for personal quarrels.

Arshak Shojaei added that preparation of minutes is a difficult task and it cannot be exactly reflective of the discussions in the meetings. In order to ensure that they do not cause any issues, he recommended that the meetings be audio-recorded instead and that the board release MP3 files on the website for all to listen. He believes that this will reduce any conflict between the board members.

Bijan Ahmadi stated that he was not clear what was meant by Mitra Saffari in her previous comments. In relation to the suggestion by Mr. Shojae, Mr. Ahmadi asked whether he knows of any other organizations who follow the practice of releasing audio recordings of meetings. He believes that comments on the minutes should be minimal and the secretary should have the right to approve or disapprove the minutes.

In response to Mr. Ahmadi's question, Mitra saffari clarified that she is addressing Mr. Amouzgar, and the concern that he is not upholding the ethical standards expected from a secretary.

Mr. Namvarazad stated that at times Mr. Amouzgar records points that are the exact opposite of what is stated by the board members.

Mr. Amouzgar challenged this position and asked for specific examples of such instances. He pointed out that contrary to Mr. Namvarazad's claim that he did not dismiss the members who travel back and forth to Iran, Mr. Namvarzad did indeed mention in the meeting of June 10, 2015 that the ICC should not be too concerned with those who travel back and forth to Iran.

Motion M-20150630-1

Moving Board Member:

Reza Ghazi

Motion Text:

The meetings of the ICC board of directors to also be recorded for the purposes of confirming the accuracy of the minutes.

Seconded:

Bijan Ahmadi

Proposed Amendment:

Mr. Shojai proposed an amendment to the effect that the recordings be made public but the names of the board members to be redacted and removed from the tape.

Ms. Ghasemi stated that it is extremely difficult to edit the videos and remove the names as suggested by Mr. Shojai.

Mr. Ahmadi added that releasing the audio recording is not necessarily in line with transparency. He also pointed out that some of the discussions may be of a confidential nature and this practice may hurt the organization.

Mr. Namvarazad seconded the amended motion.

Board members in favour of the amended motion:

- Shahram Namvarazad

Board members against

- Reza Ghazi
- Bijan Ahmadi
- Behrouz Amouzgar
- Soudeh Ghassemi

Mitra Saffari was in favor of making minutes publicly available without removing any names. Obviously, in the interest of public, board members and the organization, confidential discussions should not be revealed.

Amended motion not carried.

Main Motion Status:

Motion carried with the approval of

- Reza Ghazi
- Behrouz Amouzgar
- Soudeh Ghassemi
- Bijan Ahmadi
- Arshak Shojai

- Shahram Namvarazad
- Mitra Saffari

This motion to be put into force as of next meeting. Behrouz Amouzgar to prepare a confidentiality agreement.

2. Message in relation to Canada Day

Discussion:

Mitra Saffari stated that Canada has been the destination for many oppressed people from across the globe including Iranians and we have to appreciate this history which has resulted in a prospering a relatively secure society. Canada owes its reputation as a peaceful country to its strong social movements such as women right's movement, anti-war movement, LGBT movement, trade union movement, and many other social movements. There are many occasions to celebrate the national achievements of these movements. July 1st is not one of them. If anything, this is the day when British and French colonial forces solidified their agreement to dispossess First Nation people of their land. It would be better for us to use this day to raise awareness about this history and the plight of First Nations people in Canada.

Mr. Namvarazad stated that the approval of all board members should be sought on all communications circulated by the PR Committee. While he is personally not against acknowledging PRIDE, he believes that the opinion of the board members should have been sought on this issue.

Mr. Kahnemuyipour added that in the U.S. some refrain from celebrating Columbus day for the hardship that it caused the native communities but this form of association does not exist in the same way in the case of Canada Day.

Behrouz Amouzgar added that Canada Day is a symbol of all of the opportunities that Canada has provided to us all and any opposition to celebration of Canada Day is misguided.

Mitra Saffari stated that as I said these opportunities have been created as a result of Canada's strong social movements and they will be lost if we do not support and engage with these movements.

Reza Ghazi stated that Canada is second home to many of us and 1st home to many others. Canada Day is a day that we should all be proud of and as such we should participate in celebrating it.

Motion M-20150630-2

Moving Board Member:

Reza Ghazi

Motion Text:

The ICC to release a statement on the occasion of Canada Day and to acknowledge the opportunities provided to our community by this wonderful country.

Seconded: Bijan Ahmadi

Proposed Amendment:

Arsalan Kahnemuyipour suggested that instead of a statement we release a facebook note.

Amended motion seconded by Bijan Ahmadi

Board members in favour of the amended motion:

- Behrouz Amouzgar
- Bijan Ahmadi
- Arshak Shojai
- Mitra Saffari

Board members against the amended motion:

- Reza Ghazi
- Soudeh Ghassemi

Mr. Namvarazad abstained.

3. Federal Election Event

Moving Board Member:

Bijan Ahmadi

Motion Text:

Given the responsibility of the ICC in encouraging engagement of Iranian-Canadians in the political process in Canada and its mandate in providing Iranian-Canadian candidates from all political parties a platform for introducing themselves to the community I move that the Policy Development Committee in collaboration with the Communications and PR Committee present a plan to the board by mid July 2015 for organizing a debate/forum for the Iranian-Canadian federal election candidates (or party representatives) from all three major political parties. The proposal to be presented to the board for their approval has to include the suggested format of the event, estimated budget, and proposed date and venue for the event.

Seconded:

Soudeh Ghassemi

Status:

Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion:

Mitra Saffari asked whether in the experience of the past board these types of events would be successful, suggesting that it will not be worthwhile if not many people show up.

Arshak Shojai stated that in the past these events have been very successful and well attended.

Reza Ghazi added that in the past year a similar event was not held by the past board. It is important that we ensure no particular individual or particular party is favoured in these types of events.

Shahram Namvarazad stated that unlike what Mr. Ghazi suggested we did have a debate among the mayors. He is in favor of having a debate among the candidates. If a debate is held among Iranian candidates, others should be invited too.

4. Bill C-24 and Bill C-51

Soudeh Ghassemi stated that the above bills include provisions that affect the members of the community.

Motion Text:

The ICC to hold educational events about Bill C-24 and Bill C-51 to educate the members of our community in relation to their affects.

Proposed Amendment:

Bijan Ahmadi suggested that the above referenced matter be referred to the Policy Development Committee and a proposal to be submitted to the board by this committee.

Amendment seconded by Soudeh Ghassemi.

Discussion:

Shahram Namvarazad stated these are difficult subject matters and we should not commit to tackling them without ensuring that we have the required resources. We should also ensure that any decision made by the ICC should not be affected by partisan motivations.

Arshak Shojai stated that there already has been educational events about this bill and those who have abused the immigration system to come to Canada should not benefit from any opposition of these bills by the ICC.

Amended motion carried unanimously.

5. Support of Tirgan Festival

Moving Board Member:

Bijan Ahmadi

Motion Text:

Given the responsibility of the ICC in supporting other Iranian Canadian non-profit organizations that provide community related services and its mandate in promoting Iranian culture I move that the ICC supports the Tirgan festival by informing its members about the Tirgan Festival and their donation campaign that will be launched soon under the name of “Tirgan TOgether”.

Seconded:

Behrouz Amouzgar

Re-Seconded:

Soudeh Ghassemi

Discussion:

Mr. Shojai pointed out given that Mr. Amouzgar is involved with Tirgan, he is in a position of conflict of interest and should abstain. Mr. Amouzgar agreed and abstained from the vote.

Mr. Namvarazad stated that we should first be clear on the financial affairs of the festival prior to supporting them. He added in the previous year we sent a letter to Tirgan to ask for a copy of their bylaws but did not receive same.

Mr. Ghazi stated that all of the financial statements of Tirgan are made public and the relevant information is provided to all who are interested in a public forum in which Mr. Ghazi attended. There is no doubt that Tirgan is doing very valuable work for our community. In relation to the comments of Mr. Namvarazad, he added that Tirgan is similar to a private charity and as such its constitution and bylaws should not necessarily be provided to the members of the public. He stated that many non-profit organizations and charities operate in a similar fashion and do not publicize their bylaws as they are for internal governance purposes only. He is in favour of publicizing the fundraising campaign of Tirgan but he does not believe that we should publicize the events of Tirgan as it may create a similar expectation for many other similar groups.

Bijan Ahmadi clarified that he did not suggest that we promote every single event of Tirgan and to only assist in raising awareness about Tirgan in a high-level manner.

Arshak Shojai added that Tirgan suffers from 3 major problems: 1) it is not clear whether Tirgan is a non-profit or not as their bylaws are not available to all 2) some members of our community have issues with Tirgan and accuse Tirgan of being affiliated with the Iranian regime and these members should be respected 3) We cannot be responsible if Tirgan misuses its financial resources and if we want to promote all then we will also have to promote the likes of Super Shayan.

In response to Mr. Shojai, Behrouz Amouzgar pointed out that a simple corporate search would reveal that Tirgan is a non-profit organization.

Arsalan Kahnemuyipour added that Tirgan's financial report published in Shahrvand was very detailed.

Soudeh Ghassemi stated that the organizations that obtain financial assistance from government must have very clear financial reports and statements. She added that we cannot act on the basis of rumours.

Mr. Namvarazad stated before we proceed with voting it would be best to have Ms. Ghassemi provide a copy of the financial reports of Tirgan first.

Mr. Ahmadi stated that this motion was tabled last week and there was ample time for board members to view the financial report of Tirgan which could be easily found in publications such as Shahrvand. Provided the time constraints faced by the board, it would not be logical to delay this any further.

Mr. Shojai added that there is no rush in assisting Tirgan as they will be holding their event anyway. Some of our members have problems with Tirgan for reasons that are not appropriately discussed here. We can't just vote on a matter like this as it is a controversial issue. Any support of Tirgan will cause many issues for us and we should stay away from it. He added that if we support Tirgan, he will also request that we support Super Arzan as they sell many tickets to Iranian concerts.

Mira Saffari added that while she supports and attends Tirgan herself and invite all her friends to this event and believes that Tirgan has made a significant contribution to promoting Iranian Critical Arts, we should stay away from controversy. Given that Tirgan has had a huge support from our community and they may not really need our support, we should not cause more division in the community by supporting Tirgan and we should not be adding to issues. She doesn't believe that Tirgan is connected to the Islamic republic but at the same time does not like to cause more issues. She asked if we know Tirgan needs this support.

Mr. Ahmadi added that the request for support came from Tirgan to us directly and it is within our mandate to connect with and support organizations such as Tirgan.

Mr. Ghazi stated that we have to support organizations such as Tirgan and if board members know of other organizations that are so well organized such as Tirgan they should bring the proposals to the board.

Motion Status:

Board members in favour:

Soudeh Ghassemi

- Reza Ghazi
- Bijan Ahmadi
- Mitra Saffari

Board members against:

- Arshak Shojai
- Shahram Namvarazad

Behrouz Amouzgar abstained from voting due to conflict of interest.

Motion carried.

6. Email from 3 NGO to 4 Newly Elected Board Members

Discussion:

Arsalan Kahnemuyipour stated that a letter was sent by three NGOs to the 4 newly elected board members to the effect that the ICC is not representative of the Iranian-Canadian community due to the size of its membership.

Moving Board Members:

Arsalan Kahnemuyipour

Motion Text:

Bijan Ahmadi, Behrouz Amouzgar and Arsalan Kahnemuyipour to prepare a text reflecting the number of members of the ICC to be added in form of a footnote to all the official correspondences of the ICC.

Seconded:

Soudeh Ghassemi

Proposed Amendment:

Bijan Ahmadi suggested that we add this information to the website and only refer to the About Us section of the website at the bottom of the official correspondences instead of only including the number of members. Mr. Ahmadi suggested that this will provide the audience with a more comprehensive view of the organization.

Behrouz Amouzgar added that he is not in favour of the amendment as he believes that it is very important for us to be transparent with the recipients of our official correspondences to ensure that they are aware of the number of members of the

ICC. The main issue is the disappointment by some of the members of our community to the effect that they believe that ICC is not representative of the views of all of the Iranian-Canadian community and that will not be addressed by only including a link to the About Us section.

Status:

Motion carried unanimously.

7. Update Mostafa Azizi

Mr. Kahnemuyipour has contacted the son of Mr. Azizi and is waiting to hear back.

8. Update on Mr. Hajivand

Soudeh Ghassemi has contacted the family and has asked that Mr. Hajivand's lawyer to contact us in relation to this issue.

9. Update on Ms. Rashidi

Ms. Ghassemi has followed up on this and will report back as soon as she hears back.

Mitra Saffari added that given that this is a non-controversial issue and many new comers are faced with these type of risks, it is very important for us to be involved. By getting involved, we can build a closer relationship with the Canadian public since this accident can happen to anyone. We should cooperate with the campaign while maintaining our independence. We should also try to not waste time. We can start with sending a letter to the ministry of work and copying all MPs, urging them to take action further steps.

Mr. Kahnemuyipour enquired whether Ms. Saffari would be interested in getting involved with the issue through the culture committee in response to which Ms. Saffari stated that this issue more appropriately falls within the mandate of the Public Relations committee.

Bijan Ahmadi suggested that those who are interested to take action, to provide the board with a proposal and an action plan in relation to this issue.

Mitra Saffari stated that the suggestions are already in the table and we shouldn't get stuck in the bureaucratic process. Soudeh has already been taking care of it.

Soudeh responded that she will follow it up with Bahar.

Motion carried unanimously.

10. Update on Standing Committees

A call for volunteers has been published in social media and has been sent to the media.

11. Room booking in North York Civic Centre

Discussion:

The ICC updated the sponsorship with the City in January of 2015 and Ms. Shahla Ghafouri and Sara Takhsha were the people authorized to make room booking.

According to the requirements of the City of Toronto they require Ms. Ghafouri to send a letter to the City to advise of the change in the board of directors. Due to the delay in receiving a reply from Ms. Ghafouri to the correspondences of Mr. Ahmadi and Ms. Ghasemi, they had to obtain the approval of the councilor one more time. The issue has now been resolved and Bijan Ahmadi, Soudeh Ghasemi and Mitra Saffari can book rooms.

12. Advisory Group

Motion by Arsalan Kahnemuyipour to table the issue of Advisory Group to the next meeting.

Seconded by Mitra Saffari

She added that it's best to only focus on organizations this year and it's best not to call it the advisory group.

Arsalan Kahnemuyipour added that the term "advisory group" is in the bylaws.

Motion carried unanimously.

13. All other issues

Motion to table all the other issues.