



***ACCESS, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION***  
***“Re-examining our approaches to  
Settlement and Integration”***

**Welcoming Communities Initiative  
Markham Community Roundtable Discussion Outcomes**

**March 5, 2008**

On March 5, 2008, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) conducted its first Community Roundtable in the municipality of Markham as part of the *Welcoming Communities Initiative (WCI)* project. The WCI is a three year project supported by Canadian Heritage and has been developed based on PROMPT's (Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades) research paper titled "*Smart Settlement: A Community Engagement Model for Sustainable Immigrant Settlement in Ontario's Smaller Communities*", which proposes a policy framework and model for sustainable and effective immigrant settlement.

**WCI's objectives are to engage immigrants and municipalities as partners in building more inclusive and welcoming communities and to develop sustainable strategies that would facilitate the economic and social integration of immigrants.**

The WCI is a community engagement project that will engage various stakeholders to:

- Identify the different settlement needs and issues in various municipalities across Ontario.
- Bridge social, cultural and economic differences that will enhance civic engagement.
- Engage different stakeholders (immigrants, government, educational institutions, employment sector, settlement agencies, ethno-cultural groups, etc.) to implement a suitable model which creates an inclusive and welcoming environment for immigrants and newcomers.
- Utilize various communication mechanisms (forum, consultation, and quarterly newsletter) to facilitate effective information exchange and to celebrate the contributions of immigrants.
- Foster partnerships between stakeholders to ensure equitable representation in the civic processes.

At the Markham Community Roundtable on March 5, 2008 at the Milliken Mills Public Library, various stakeholders from the education, settlement, employment, library, health, and volunteer sector as well as ethno-cultural specific agencies and community groups were brought together to discuss issues of access, equity and inclusion needs of immigrant communities in Markham. The half day Community Roundtable consisted of discussions based on the following questions:

- ***How can we move towards an equitable settlement system?***
- ***How can we ensure newcomers have full access to public services and resources including space?***
- ***How can we engage newcomers to participate in public decision-making processes?***
- ***How can we build a community that creates a sense of belonging?***

This Markham Community Roundtable report provides a summary of the key discussions that emerged from the group activities and identification of settlement and integration priorities for the Markham community to move forward with.

The first discussion at the Markham Community Roundtable began with identifying what is already happening in Markham with respect to community work on diversity, equity and inclusivity. This asset mapping exercise provided an overview of the current community initiatives, project, or programs lead by the local municipal government, school board, non-profit organizations and community-based groups.

***The participants identified 21 different community work on diversity related projects, programs and initiatives as listed in the following table.***

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Program, Project or Initiative</b>
1. Markham Public Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Library Settlement Program</li> <li>- Collection, e.g. multilingual materials, ESL materials</li> <li>- Library programs for different cultures, e.g. Asian Heritage Month events, Cantonese Book Club etc.</li> <li>- Displays for newcomers</li> </ul>
2. Canadian Cancer Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity Portfolio</li> <li>- Community Development</li> <li>- Multi-lingual Hotline</li> </ul>
3. Cederwood Public School and Lincoln Alexander Public School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Saturday program for newcomer families and children</li> </ul>
4. Helpmate Information & Volunteer Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multilingual Volunteer Program</li> </ul>
5. Town of Markham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Race Relations Committee</li> <li>- Contact Centre</li> <li>- Diversity Specialist in the HR Department</li> <li>- Cross-cultural Inter-club for older adults</li> </ul>
6. York Region District School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Race Relations &amp; Ethno-cultural Diversity Department</li> <li>- Community and Cultural Services Unit</li> <li>- Outreach Program in South Markham</li> </ul>
7. Social Services Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity Training to mainstream service providers</li> <li>- Seniors Club</li> </ul>
8. JVS Markham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment help for international trained professionals</li> </ul>
9. Maytree Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mentorship Program</li> </ul>
10. York Region Inclusivity Action Plan project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome Centre</li> </ul>
11. Markham Board of Trade (Private Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity Committee</li> </ul>
12. TRIEC (Toronto Region)	

Immigrant Employment Council	
13. Central LHIN	- Diversity in health services
14. Middlefield High School	- Seniors Wellness Club (a branch of the Ontario's Tamil Seniors Association)
15. York Region Police	- Faith group tours - Cultural Diversity Bureau
16. York Region LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender)	
17. Markham African Caribbean Association	
18. Federation of Chinese Canadian Association of Markham	
19. Centre of Information and Community Services (CICS)	- Settlement services for newcomers
20. Toronto Cross-Cultural Services Association (TCCSA)	- Chinese settlement service provider
21. Human Endeavour	- Tamil Wellness Group at Milliken Mills High School

Some of the activities identified are programs and projects delivered by community agencies and are accessed by certain ethno-cultural populations. While, the other activities identified are accessible by the general public such as with the school board and the Town of Markham. Overall, Markham as a community has taken leadership in the area of diversity work and continues to do more work to ensure immigrants are settled and integrated and part of community building.

Building on the asset mapping exercise, participants were given specific group questions to address ***what does Markham's immigrant community need to fully participate in community building.*** The core focus of this group activity was to look beyond the initial phase of settlement which includes basic supports of housing, employment and language needs and identify gaps that prevent immigrants to be active participants in community building. This part of the Community Roundtable consisted of group work to address one of the four questions and report back to the larger group.

**1. What kind of barriers exists in Markham which exclude immigrants from activity participating in Markham's civic society?**

- Language barriers
- Discrimination and Stereotypes
- Time restraints
- Low self-esteem
- Isolation
- Transportation
- Lack of information on opportunities, laws and civil rights
- Lack of funds and resources
- Lack of role models
- Diversity within ethno-cultural groups
- Accepting immigrants as "Canadians"

2. **What steps need to be taken to make the public services in Markham responsive and appropriate to its culturally diverse population?**
  - Provide Information on how to access services
  - Integrate human diversity and inclusivity in the school curriculum
  - To set up Welcome Centres in Markham
    - Should be geographically accessible to immigrants
    - Should provide space for smaller immigrant groups to deliver programs
  - Policy changes with the current immigration system
  - Encourage and engage immigrants to participate in the political system
  - Support the work of grassroots organizing and organizations
  - Education and awareness campaign through media outlets including mainstream and ethnic media.
  
3. **If racial or other forms of discrimination happen to a newcomer, how will the Markham community help the individual deal with the incident?**
  - To report to a school, workplace and public place
  - Access the York Region Police Hotline program
  - Bring up sensitivity in organization and conduct on-going diversity training for all stakeholders including immigrants and service providers.
  - Support cultural programs initiated by the community.
  
4. **Immigrants may not have the same access to public decision-making processes, institutions and systems as their Canadian born counterparts. What are a few ways to ensure that immigrants have meaningful and equitable opportunities to participate in community building in Markham?**
  - To work with the municipal government to ensure that the Council represents the diversity in the community. The Council should provide opportunities for ethno-cultural groups to get involved and have a voice.
  - The school board should provide opportunities for immigrants to participate and stay connected with the community at large.
  - It is important that information and correspondence is available in multilingual services for newcomers to access and to learn how to get involved.

The last half of the Community Roundtable focused on identifying priorities to address challenges pertaining to access, equity and inclusion work for Markham. Based on identifying and examining the community's needs and gaps, the following table summarizes next steps to ***Move forward the priorities.***

**What are the access, equity, and inclusion priorities for Markham?**

<b>Community Priority</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>Access to public space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accessible and free after school programs</li> <li>- access to parks, recreation and community centre space</li> </ul>	Town of Markham YRDSB
<b>Human diversity in the school curriculum</b>	- build on YRDSB characters	York Region Inclusivity Action Plan project,

	-education campaign -student surveys	Working Group 4 YRDSB Ontario Seniors Club
<b>Access to information</b>	- civil rights - laws and legislations - information should be multi-lingual	All three levels of government Community organizations Pooling of resources Parents and residents
<b>Civic engagement</b>	- awareness and education campaign - voting opportunities - mentoring for candidates	The Maytree Foundation (abcGTA Program) Non-profit sector
<b>Access to meaningful employment</b>	- working with employers and the private sector - recognition of international experience	TRIEC

**Next Steps:**

The Markham Community Roundtable report summarized the community's discussions and inputs concerning immigrant settlement and integration needs particularly with issues of access, equity and inclusion. As a result of the Community Roundtable meeting, the community formulated ideas and strategies to start addressing these issues by building on existing resources and working in collaboration.

Part two of the Markham Community Roundtable will host a residents meeting in May to provide a forum for parents, youth, seniors and local members to discuss and share their perspective on the settlement and integration needs of immigrants.

***If you have any questions, please contact***

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