



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

Welcoming Communities Initiative
Vaughan Community Roundtable Discussion Outcomes

March 11, 2008

On March 11, 2008, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) conducted its second Community Roundtable in the municipality of Vaughan 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 Vaughan Community Roundtable on March 11, 2008 at the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, various stakeholders from the education, settlement, employment, recreation, housing, health, and legal 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 Vaughan. 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 Vaughan 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 Vaughan community to move forward with.

The first discussion at the Vaughan Community Roundtable began with identifying what is already happening in Vaughan 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 9 different community works on diversity related project s, programs and initiatives as listed in the following table.**

Organization Name	Program, Project or Initiative
1. Human Endeavour (South Asian service provider)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Horizons Program (alternate income supports & development of economic opportunities) - Wellness Seniors Group in partnership with CHATS - Mom and tot's program - Domestic Violence Outreach Program
2. Homelessness Alliance	- Women Sub-committee
3. City of Vaughan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seniors Club for Italians, Philippino, South Asian and Chinese - Diversity and Equity Committee
4. Community Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS)	- Ethnic outreach programs for seniors
5. YRDSB, YRCDSB and York Region Police	- Together for Maple program
6. Blue Hills, Kinark Child and Family Services and Social Services Network (SSN)	- Creating Bridges project
7. York Region Inclusivity Action Plan (IAP) project	- Welcome Centre (LINC classes, employment and settlement support)
8. COSTI & TRIEC (Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council)	- Mentorship program
9. New Hope United Church	- Community outreach program

Most of the activities identified are programs and services delivered by independent community agencies or by partnership projects and are accessed by the general public and ethno-cultural populations in Vaughan. Other than the City of Vaughan's Equity and Diversity Committee and York Region Inclusivity Action Plan project, the community of Vaughan has not done much work on immigrant challenges related to access, equity and inclusion. However, the community is well aware of its growing immigrant population and lack of services to meet the growing needs beyond the initial phase of settlement. Based on this discussion, the community continues to express concerns and interest to do more work to ensure immigrants are settled and integrated and part of community building in Vaughan.

Building on the asset mapping exercise, participants were given specific group questions to address **what does Vaughan'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 Vaughan which exclude immigrants from activity participating in Vaughan's civic society?

- Lack of funds and resources
 - Funding guidelines are too narrow;
 - Continuous struggle for funding
 - short-term funding issues;
 - uncertainty in funding;
- Lack of coordinated Information for newcomers (scattered information, many places and different departments)
- Leadership from the non-profit sector
- Affordable public space
- Accessibility & disability barriers
- Technology (lack of access and automated message systems in English)
- More immigrants working in their first language other than English or French (based on 2006 Census)
- Provincial and federal priorities on immigration (priorities between the two level of government do not match)
- Mentorship opportunities and lack of paid placement
- Too many organization formalities

2. What steps need to be taken to make the public services in Vaughan responsive and appropriate to its culturally diverse population?

Steps that have been taken:

- Web Portal (link to York Region) in multiple languages
- Cultural sensitive swimming (men/ladies only) no viewing
- City of Vaughan
 - Community relations changed to Diversity & Equity Committee
 - Libraries (diversity focused, promote culture)
 - Willing to commit resources & time
 - Future plan to update community centres into service centres
 - Vaughan 2020 Vision

Steps to be taken:

- City of Vaughan information is still in one language (English/French)
- Engage communities through ethnic media.
 - approach volunteers to translate and provide information
- Develop strong & formal links to volunteer groups that represent newcomers
- Overcome language barriers
- Promote partnerships between ESL organizations and community partners
- More focus on volunteer coordination role (less of an area of portfolio and more a full time focus)
- Directing and supporting newcomers to attend programs

- Formalize links between agencies and outreach representative
 - Move away from centre based program
 - extend to community based locations
 - use of schools, New Hope United Church
3. **If racial or other forms of discrimination happen to a newcomer, how will the Vaughan community help the individual deal with the incident?**
- York Region Police – Cultural & Diversity Division
 - Existing community services address racial discrimination
 - school board, settlement services, municipal government through their committees, community legal services, community ethnic groups and places of worship
 - public education on rights
 - Outreach to ethnic communities
 - Bringing existing agencies together to discuss this topic
 - Create cultural awareness and sensitivity
 - local employers and the broad 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 Vaughan?**
- Communication strategies to inform new communities of opportunities (outreach to places of worship)
 - Provide information on a continuous basis (over 3 yrs) and in a graduated format.
 - a continuum of opportunities of engagement and involvement
 - “culturally proficient” & multiple communications to reach out
 - institutions must understand the culture of the new Canadians
 - engaging in the dialogue
 - the responsibilities of the decision-making bodies to be inclusive and representative of the communities they serve
 - creating opportunities to learn about the decision-making structures & to invite participation
 - mentoring, sponsoring and modeling participation into the settlement process

The last half of the Community Roundtable focused on identifying priorities to address challenges pertaining to access, equity and inclusion work for Vaughan. 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 Vaughan?

Community Priority	Focus Area	Resources
Meaningful volunteer opportunities	- Outreach methods - Access to institutions & large organizations	Volunteer sector Community organizations School Boards Municipal Government
Youth	- communication to raise awareness about immigrant youth related issues - supports for families and	School Boards Community Agencies Settlement sector Ethno-cultural groups

	youths	Parents Youth
Access to meaningful employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to professions - Recognition of international credentials - Local mobilization - Tools and information to for employers - Employer engagement - Pre-settlement support 	All three levels of government TRIEC Vaughan Chambers of Commerce Human Resources Professionals COSTI

Next Steps:

The Vaughan 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 Vaughan 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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