

## City of Brampton

Photo: The Crazy Tourist

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH EXISTING FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION NETWORK

#### MUNICIPAL PROFILE:

POPULATION: ~593,638

LOCATION: Southern Ontario, part of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the seat of Peel Region

SIZE: 266.36 km<sup>2</sup>

TOTAL PRIVATE DWELLINGS: 173,428

GREAT LAKES WATERSHED: Lake Ontario

#### BACKGROUND

In recent years, the City of Brampton has experienced multiple extreme weather events that triggered the development of this community-based adaptation project. Brampton has endured several extreme heat days, multiple instances of extreme rainfall and flooding, and was significantly impacted by the catastrophic ice storm which swept through Southern Ontario in 2013. The ice storm left 20,000 homes without power, and many bus routes inaccessible for days. Brampton is also situated in one of Canada's tornado pathways.

When investigating the City's response to these events, a significant gap in outreach to vulnerable populations was found. Public information about ice storm response was delivered through social media, but a large segment of the population was not reached. The City found that there was no direct method of wellness checks, and volunteer agencies were frequently overwhelmed. During extreme heat days, the City opened eight cooling centers located in community centers, but their usage was limited.

These findings led the City to the realization that vulnerable populations were not always being served during extreme weather events – meaning the target audience of the City's emergency communications efforts were sometimes unreachable during critical times.

The City of Brampton then discovered a key opportunity to improve its emergency response outreach. Census data demonstrates that 90% of Brampton citizens had religious affiliations. All major faith groups were represented and made frequent use of 79 registered places of worship across the City. The presence of faith-based communities in the City of Brampton brought to light a new method of sharing information and spreading resilience across vulnerable communities. From this realization, the Lighthouse Project began.

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The initiative undertaken under ICLEI's Collaborative Implementation Group project is an extension of an existing faith-based organization (FBO) network called the Lighthouse Program, which focuses on sharing emergency preparedness knowledge through religious networks. The project is a city-wide initiative aiming to involve local Faith-Based Organizations in climate change adaptation. Its purpose is to assist vulnerable populations during emergencies and improve the City's ability to respond to extreme weather events.



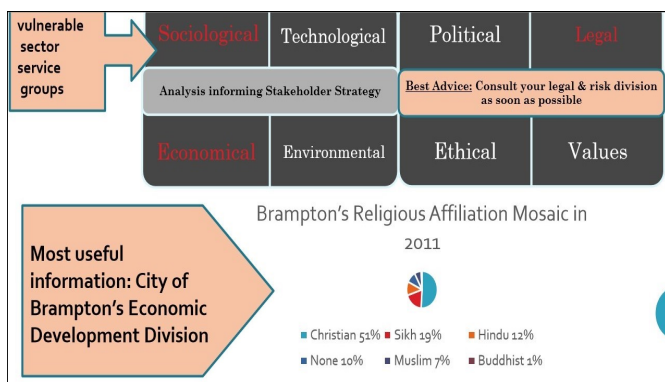
City of Brampton





The project included a study identifying and mapping vulnerable populations and faith-based centers around the City, forming relationships with leaders from FBO's around the City, and hosting training workshops for FBO volunteers from different religious communities. The training workshops covered key concepts from climate change, adaptation, and emergency preparedness. The leaders who attended the training would then disseminate the information through their own religious communities using their preferred messaging, language, and materials. The project was inclusive of major faith groups present in the City of Brampton, as well as all municipal wards, which each had representation from at least one faith-based organization.

The Brampton Environmental Planning Division and the Brampton Emergency Management Office (BEMO) coordinated the program together and enlisted the support of FBOs already signed on to the existing emergency preparedness program.



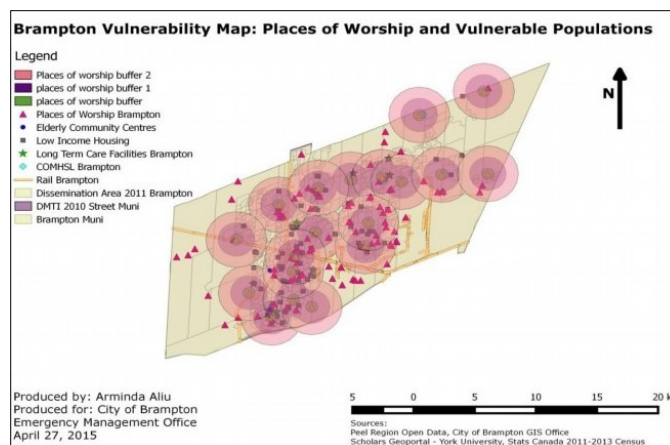
## OBJECTIVES

The objective of the project was to educate partnering FBO members, their volunteers, and their respective community on the benefits of implementing climate change adaptation initiatives. The goal was to have 10 partnering FBOs participate in the program in 2017 and provide at least one training seminar to each FBO during that period, then to organize a follow-up with participants on the success of implementing climate change adaptation initiatives.

## PROJECT PLANNING

Phase 1 of the project consisted of the background research which would inform the selection of training locations and participants. The study included identification of vulnerable populations in Brampton, an inventory of FBOs and NGOs, and a list of potential FBOs to be invited. The results of the study also included a map showing concentrations of vulnerable populations, distribution of FBOs, and 1.5km distance to place of refuge. It was found that many FBOs were located near vulnerable populations, meaning they were well-suited to act as a resilience hub in the community.

As part of the initial study, the City also identified other communities with similar programs which shared common interests and goals. They opened a dialogue about the program with other municipalities across the country, with many expressions of interest in replicating Brampton's program.



Phase 2 of the project included contacting FBOs for potential collaboration, evaluating risks and opportunities associated with the project, and creating an agreement template. FBOs near the highest concentrations of vulnerable populations were prioritized. Trainings were grouped by geographic area as not to separate different FBOs. The legal agreement was defined as a "collaboration" between the City and the FBO, and included terms important to the consulted legal and risk advisors. It also included terms for use of facilities, service level commitments, response times, activation protocols, and more, to ensure that the participating FBOs delivered optimal support to their communities during emergencies. By March 2017, the study was completed, agreements in principle were received from 8 potential participants, and expression of interest received from 12 additional potential participants.



Phase 3 marked the start of the volunteer training program. This was an expansion of the training created in Phase 2, to ensure full training of the volunteers involved within the collaborative agreements. The trainings took place at Brampton's Green Briar Recreation Centre on the morning of November 28, 2017. City facilitators used a modified version of the *Resilientville* framework, developed by organization Faith & the Common Good. The training included capacity-building strategies and climate-related hazard information.

The training groups quickly recognized the potential for FBO involvement in City emergency exercises. The geographical representation of FBOs was a major opportunity for emergency response procedures. For example, while daycare children are typically evacuated to the City's community center, they could instead be walked to the church two doors down.

Phase 4 of the project focused on developing a marketing strategy to promote the program throughout Brampton. Branding and marketing tools were used to target vulnerable populations, and to engage more faith communities to get involved in training and dissemination of emergency preparedness information.

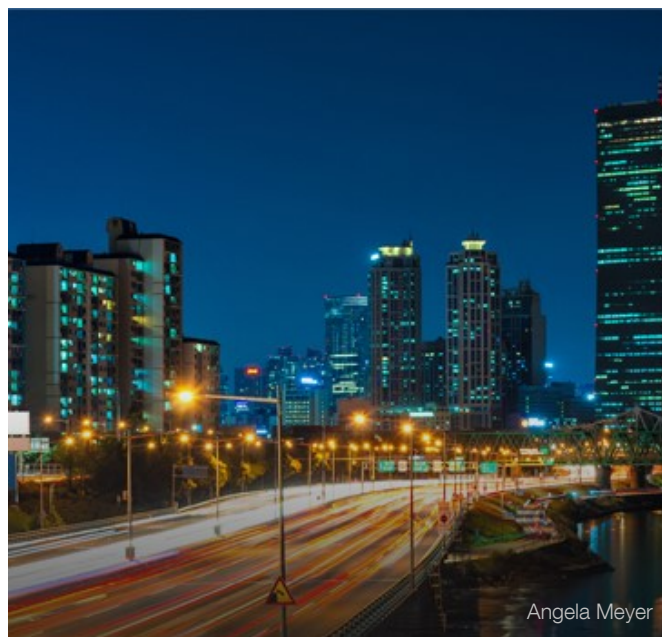
As the project concluded, Phase 5 was developed to ensure that the program can be replicated in other communities. The City's network development strategy includes outreach to other communities interested in the Lighthouse Project, to create a province-wide network of support for the initiative. Presentations at conferences, at other municipal council meetings, and among partner organizations will help to spread the word about the newly expanded Lighthouse Program.

### FUNDING

Funding for the project was supported by the \$7,000 grant from the MOECC for participating in the Collaborative Implementation Group project. These funds were matched by cash or in-kind contributions on behalf of the City. Some funding for the program was already included within current operational budgets.

Due to the volunteer involvement, the cost of the program is mainly linked to staff time and printing materials. The City also hired a staff person to work fulltime on the Lighthouse Program. This role was supported by an intern from York University who assisted with research and worked on the training program, liaising with partners.

Toronto-based organization Faith & the Common Good has a similar mandate to the Lighthouse Program, partnered closely on the project, and provided financial support as well. Part of the funding was used to enhance



Angela Meyer



the Lighthouse Program, and to create opportunities for replication in the City of Toronto.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

The success of the project was largely determined from partnerships built with FBOs across Brampton who were willing to participate in volunteer trainings and disseminate knowledge throughout their faith communities. The Lighthouse Program, having existed for a few years in Brampton, provided an entry point to numerous faith leaders who were already engaged with the City on emergency preparedness, and opened more doors for new relationships and collaborations.

Consensus from City Council and Senior Management also contributed to the validity of the program. The project also received support from the Interfaith Council of Peel, Catholic Church Greater Toronto Diocese, and the Muslims Council of Peel.

Faith & the Common Good also assisted with the development of the program and provided financial support for dissemination of trainings and replication of the program. An Intern from York University supported the program through research and communications contributions.

### **CHALLENGES**

The challenges associated with the planning and implementation of the project were largely political. The Project required political support and delegation of authority from Council prior to signing agreements with any project participants.

There was also difficulty gaining consensus with local and regional government participants on the parameters of the program. Eventually, the Program Lead successfully conveyed that the Lighthouse Program was focused on community capacity-building, and support was granted.

### **POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

There were several positive outcomes associated with this project, mostly stemming from its innovativeness and inclusiveness across the City of Brampton.

The legal agreement established with the FBOs was found to be ground-breaking within Ontario. The collaboration agreements with FBOs included terms for use of facilities, training commitments, activation protocols, and other

aspects of emergency response that had not formerly been established with faith groups. The Province of Ontario has since urged the City to share the template with other cities and communities.

There have also been expressions of interest from Toronto, Burlington, Mississauga, Richmond Hill, Hamilton, and London, Ontario on the possibility of replicating the Brampton model. As part of Phase 5 of the project, Brampton hopes to bring these communities into a province-wide network to support widespread implementation of the program and assist each other in emergencies.

The most innovative and positive outcome of the project is certainly the newfound capacity and relationships built across a large population of the City of Brampton. The training of FBO volunteers and leaders, and dissemination of information through strong existing networks, will improve the resilience of the City as a whole. The project also helps also to build capacity in communities, so that residents can help each other in emergencies. With long-term implementation of the program, the City's emergency response measures can be significantly bolstered by participation and support of FBOs, especially those which operate in vulnerable areas of the City.

### **MEASURING OUTCOMES**

The program's effectiveness will be measured in multiple ways.

- The level of participation in faith-based organization training workshops
- Evaluation forms distributed at the training workshops
- Individual follow-up with participants within a few months from each event to determine the amount of implementation done by participants.
- Expressions of interest from other community groups and municipalities to participate

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Now that the training modules have been established and the network has achieved a level of credibility, the workshops can be repeated annually and expanded to address climate change as well as other City priorities. Over time, it can also be expanded to include other communities, many of whom are interested in replicating the program locally. The City has received significant interest from other municipalities and from FBOs with their place of worship in another community, as the interest beyond the borders of Brampton grows.

## Acknowledgements

This project was made possible by the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, under the Canada-Ontario (COA) Respecting the Great Lakes.

## The Great Lakes Adaptation Project Collaborative Implementation Groups

The Collaborative Implementation Groups (CIG) project targeted 12 municipalities throughout the Great Lakes watershed to identify and implement an adaptation initiative in their community over the period of one year (January 2017 – December 2017). The CIGs came together at various stages to share experiences, challenges, and opportunities on such items as measuring progress through indicators, project financing, budgeting, scheduling, evaluation, monitoring, and reporting. Ultimately, the CIGs were an opportunity to bring together practitioners struggling with implementation challenges to create a peer support network that brings these individuals together (both online and in person) to collectively work through the implementation of an identified action and share the resulting experiences.

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