



# **Canadian** Interfaith Open-House Weekend 2018

A World Interfaith Harmony Week event

## ACTIVITY REPORT



# Canadian Interfaith Open-House Weekend 2018

Activity Report to the World Interfaith Harmony Week Team

## INTRODUCTION

### Summary

The office of Mr. Baylis, Member of the Canadian Parliament for Pierrefonds-Dollard, organized a national event framework following the spirit and guidelines of the World Interfaith Harmony Week.

This event, called the Canadian Interfaith Open-House Weekend, encouraged as many places of worship as possible to open their doors to their neighbours during the weekend of 2-4 February 2018.

In total, 25 interfaith events occurred under the Canadian Interfaith Open House Weekend banner, spanning 5 diverse regions of Canada. These regions were the West Island of Montreal, the Saint Laurent borough of Montreal and the city of Laval in the province of Quebec, as well as the Ottawa-Vanier and Grand-River regions in Ontario. This surpassed our initial expectations and became a first-year success, which we will aim to replicate and expand in following years.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the dozens of faith and interfaith organisers that made this possible, to the other Canadian interfaith groups who led the way, and to the World Interfaith Harmony Week team for setting a common vision for mutual understanding.



### How the Canadian Interfaith Open-House Weekend Came to Be

The Canadian demographic situation, particularly in urban centers, necessitates that heightened attention be placed on interfaith harmony. Canada is a richly diverse multicultural and open society, meaning that peoples of all faiths must collaborate and actively defend our welcoming yet vocal socio-political environment.

Multiple not-for-profit groups in Canada promote interfaith initiatives, and indeed two of them, Interfaith Halifax and Interfaith Toronto, are previous awardees of the World Interfaith Harmony Week initiative. Their leadership in previous years demonstrated to us the feasibility of launching similar events on an even grander – Canadian – scale.

We therefore decided to create a local event in the West Island of Montreal as a testbed for our ideas. The concept of an interfaith weekend was so positively received that we opted to expand our ambitions for the first year – by soliciting other Members of Parliament and Interfaith groups in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

## PLANNING

### Phase 1: Recruitment of Regional Organisers

Once we had decided to expand our reach, we focused on recruiting other politicians and interfaith groups in the month of December 2017. The logic here was to gain traction with regional organisers which could themselves solicit local places of worship at a later time.



### Phase 2: Recruitment of Faith Groups

This next phase was undertaken in the first two weeks of January 2018, where all participating regional organisers – there were five of these - turned their attention towards contacting local faith groups and onboarding those that were interested in participating. Much of the reaction was positive and 25 events were planned.

### Phase 3: Coaching and Marketing

Once we secured the participation of all local faith groups, we then engaged in the coaching of faith groups and marketing to the general public. This occurred in the last two weeks of January 2018.

Regional organisers assisted faith groups in whatever ways they required to host successful events. It is important to note that all local preparations within each faith group were managed

internally, and each group was responsible for planning and executing their own events. Our regional organisers focused on providing collaborative materials, such as pamphlets, nametags and ideas for activities to greet visitors with.



Aside from this, regional organisers also assisted with marketing to the general public by way of Facebook events and posts, as well as the distribution of posters and pamphlets locally. We also encouraged them to seek media presence with press releases and contact with bloggers. This way local faith groups did not have to worry about graphic design and internet presence. Places of worship were instead

encouraged to spread the word within their own congregations and to organise “delegations” from their own groups to go visit others in their respective regions.

Centrally, we created a Facebook page for the Canadian Interfaith Open House Weekend, from which we were able to create event pages and other materials to distribute to regional organisers.

## Execution

Over the weekend of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, the following 23 events occurred, in 5 different regions of Canada. Exceptionally, two additional events occurred outside the designated weekend of February, bringing our total to 25 events. A list of events is found at the end of this report.

Events varied in style between places of worship. Each included a visit of the establishment in question. Further to this was a diverse sampling of the following activities: An introduction to religious principles and practices, the taking of questions from guests, the dissemination of educational materials, the attending of a service or prayer, and most frequently an informal discussion and meet & greet over coffee, tea and snacks.

At each open-house event the regional organiser was present and was able to record lessons learned, towards the improvement of the Interfaith Weekend’s program in consecutive years. Attendance at these events varied between a handful and a few dozen visitors, all in all proving successful.

The event did garner media attention, both from social media influencers and traditional media. This was beneficial as it amplified the message of harmony beyond those who attended the event. One such article can be found at the following link:

<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/west-island-gazette/pierrefonds-dollard-mp-promoting-diversity-and-interfaith-dialogue>

## FUTURE ACTIONS



Following the writing of this report, a capstone event will occur for local religious leadership in the West Island of Montreal, on March 14<sup>th</sup>. This will be an opportune moment to facilitate the exchange of ideas and the consolidation of local relationship building resulting from the Interfaith Open-House Weekend initiative. In later years, we look forward to suggesting this type of event to all regional organisers as a great way of fostering dialogue.

In earnest, we will begin planning for the 2019 event to provide for more lead time and to ensure that participation increases for our second open-house weekend. Throughout the year, these activities will focus on leveraging the successes of the 2018 event, and on creating ties with other interfaith initiatives throughout Canada, so that we may share lessons learned and hopefully collaborate on World Interfaith Harmony Week 2019.

### Contact Information

For more information about the Canadian Interfaith Open House Weekend initiative's 2018 events, please contact the office of Frank Baylis, Member of Parliament for Pierrefonds-Dollard, at [frank.baylis@parl.gc.ca](mailto:frank.baylis@parl.gc.ca)

## List of 2018 Canadian Interfaith Open-House Weekend Events

### Friday: February 2

Islamic Humanitarian Service  
11AM, 81 Hollinger Crescent, Kitchener, ON

Abo Ther Al Ghafari Mosque  
2-4PM, 273 Donald St, Ottawa, ON

### Saturday: February 3

Hindu Mandir  
12-3PM, 50 Kesmark, DDO, QC

St. Luke's Catholic Church  
2-4PM, 106A Anselme-Lavigne, DDO, QC

St. Raphael Archange Church  
2-4PM, 495 Cherrier, Île Bizard, QC

Al-Jamieh Islamic Center  
2-5PM, 241 Anselme-Lavigne, DDO, QC

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
11-2PM, 1250 Strasburg, Kitchener, ON

Eastview Baptist Church  
10-3PM, 329 Olmstead street, Vanier, ON

Islamic Cultural center  
6-9PM, 847 St. Laurent BLVD, ON, QC

### Sunday: February 4

Roxboro United Church  
10-1PM, 116 Cartier, Roxboro, QC

Gurudwara Sahib  
12-2PM, 1155 Hyman, DDO, QC

Masjid Makkah-Al-Mukkaramah  
2-4PM, 11900 Gouin O, Pierrefonds, QC

Mary Queen of Peace Church  
2:30-4:30, 11075 Gouin O, Pierrefonds, QC  
Thiru Murugan Temple  
5-7PM, 1611 Blvd St. Regis, DDO, QC

Église arménienne catholique  
9-3PM, 858 Côte-Vertu, St-Laurent, QC

Église chrétienne évangélique de Saint-Laurent  
10:15-12PM, 1775 Édouard-Laurin, St-Laurent, QC

Congrégation Beth Ora  
9:15-10:15AM, 2600 rue Badeaux, St-Laurent, QC

L'Assemblée spirituelle des bahá'ís de Montréal  
1-4PM, 1548 des Pins Ouest, Montreal, QC

Kitchener-Waterloo Gurudwara  
11-12, 2070 Snyder's Rd E, Petersburg, ON

Ohev Yisroel Synagogue  
1-4PM, 516 Rideau Street Ottawa, ON

Islamic Society Of Gloucester  
4-8PM, 1627 Maxime St, Gloucester, ON

### Saturday: February 10

Beth Tikvah Synagogue  
10:30-12:30, 136 Blvd Westpark, DDO, QC

### Wednesday: March 14

Capstone event of local participating religious leaders in the West Island of Montreal at the office of Frank Baylis, MP for Pierrefonds-Dollard