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### Brampton: Flower City not yet in Full Bloom

Stories such as the proposed expansion of City Hall and the completion of a \$93 million youth jail in Brampton pushed the plight of the average Bramptonian aside during the past few months. As politicians wrestle with questions of greater infrastructure, many Bramptonians teeter on the brink of poverty and commonly face unemployment, social exclusion and injustice— all symptoms of a struggling economy and/or the byproduct of social marginalization.

Although Canada is finally seeing the first signs of economic recovery, the mere promise of a bright future will not aid those suffering through tough economic and social circumstances. As Brampton and the Region of Peel both continue to attract a large number of Newcomers to Canada, it is imperative that prominent Brampton stakeholders and the general public not forget the dire needs of our fellow citizens.

It is critical for all stakeholders to realize the need to develop a resilient, prosperous and inclusive community. Tax dollars helped build now deserted monuments such as the old Heritage Theatre and the Peel Memorial Hospital; yet funding allocated to community social services agencies addressing the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society is sparse. The real foundation of a healthy community is its people. **BNRC encourages community leaders to recognize this and adequately provide funding to overcome this current crisis affecting Newcomers to Canada, women, youth, children and families.**

### Newcomer news: Employment fairness and inclusion?

A city publication, promises that “We welcome all our Newcomers and invite you to be part of the Brampton Community...the City of Brampton takes immense pride in its diverse community, culture and heritage. The city has something to offer for everyone –arts, music, nature, shopping, entertainment or sports.”

This is a wonderful goal but before immigrants can fully embrace all that this city has to offer, issues of fairness and equity facing Newcomers regarding housing and employment opportunities need to be addressed. How can the City of Brampton help Newcomers to Canada so that this holistic promise of Brampton life can be fulfilled? By supporting agencies such as BNRC which strive to create financial stability, acceptance and inclusion for all Newcomers.

**Agencies such as BNRC offer long-term tools and skill sets to a large segment of the Brampton community.** BNRC provides multiple essential services to facilitate and expedite the settlement, employment and integration of newcomers, including ISAP (Integration Settlement and Adaptation Program), LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), and JSW (Job Search Workshops), a variety of Youth and Family Programs and OEYC (Ontario Early Years Centres).

### Community safety: Safe City and new local jail

The opening of the \$93 million youth jail may make many of the general public believe the city is safer. But that would be a wrong assumption. Bars and walls are a last step in making a community safer.

What truly makes a difference are initiatives such as the Peel Youth Violence Prevention Network, in which BNRC is an active partner. With prevention being the operative word, the network believes that “strong communities come from strong connections.”

Through networking with youth, police and community organizations, we aim to learn and address the factors that contribute to youth violence. Long-term goals such as making schools safer can be realized only when we engage with families to develop positive communication between parents and youth and by fostering an understanding of vulnerable populations. Without this understanding, Brampton will continue to erect multi-million dollar jails and pour local deviants into them.

**In order to make a tangible contribution to a safer city, BNRC developed a Crime Prevention Proposal with the aim of stopping violence before it happens.** It works together with schools to identify at-risk youth and provide them with academic and developmental activities such as the arts, sports and instill values of community ownership. Ultimately, this will provide youth with the tools to craft a brighter future—free from violence and crime—for themselves.

## A Look Forward

The overall analysis of the state of our community identifies many challenges ahead, but does not seem to portray just a gloomy situation.

The good news is though that Brampton is still growing: Construction in Brampton, although at a lower pace, is starting to increase again thanks to significant investments from leading companies like Alterra, Inzola and Mattamy. The decline of the employment rate has slowed down, and economic expansion has started to show.

Brampton is still a resilient city, with a great diverse population, community capacity and well positioned for the future as we continue the quest for prosperity and happiness.

Let's just make sure that no one is left behind, let's make sure that our Flower City is in full bloom!

## Connect to BNRC

As a registered, non-profit, community-based social service provider in Brampton, BNRC free Programs and Services are critical to the well-being of our neighbourhoods, as well as to the attainment of economic growth, hope, prosperity and harmony in our city. Our role becomes more evident during times like these, when we are facing a recession and all its economic and social consequences.

**Please help BNRC help our community by becoming a member or simply volunteer your time. As a corporate citizen, a charitable tax deductible donation will certainly make a great difference. Also, please join us on Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2010 for BNRC's Brampton Cares Gala.**

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