



In The Name Of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

المعهد الإسلامي في تورنتو

Islamic Institute of Toronto

Education for Virtuous Living

## Islam in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities

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This session was an introduction to Islam in Canada that began with a look at Canada from the geographical, historical perspective. The size of Canada and its great potential in material resources helped to set the stage. Also a survey of the First Nations people who came to Canada nearly 20,000 years ago: how did they survive and what was their contribution to civilization? The students learned that over half of the world's products (like potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, watermelon, etc.) come from the Americas. The early people also enjoyed the belief in one God. The Mikmaq nation who made first contact with the Europeans believed in Niskam, Creator, Sustainer and Supreme Being. This is in line with Surah An-Nahl, verse 36 where Allah tells us that Prophets were sent to all nations. Following this background a general history of the presence of Muslims in Canada using Dawood Hamdani's work on "Muslims and Islam in Canada" was given. We learned that Muslims were recorded here in Ontario from as far back as 1871. Later settlers came to work on the wagon trains and the railroads during the expansion of Canada. The first mosque of Edmonton, Alberta, Ar-Rashid Mosque (1938) is a testament to the sacrifices Muslims made in building this nation. The workshop then looked at the waves of Muslims in the late 20th and early 21st century leading up to the present situation where Muslim now make up over 10% of the GTA.

The rapid expansion of the Muslim population and the rapid secularization of society has led to a serious identity crisis in the Muslim community. In addition to this, the rise of racism and Islamophobia has caused many Muslims to either try to assimilate or to isolate themselves. These two alternatives are not working and an Islamic revival that enables Muslims to play a strong, open role in Canadian society is needed today. Some of the elements of Revival and solutions to the crises were discussed. The following are the main points: An increase in Taqwa (God consciousness), a proper knowledge of Islam, proper Islamic character, courage and patience, wisdom and balance; a good working knowledge of society and its trends, Shura (mutual consultation) in all affairs; cooperation and operational unity among Muslims; a positive, empowering approach to life, and outreach (Dawah) by providing Islamic solutions to real problems in society.