

## Muslims in Toronto

Much of the Muslim world, from Asia to the deserts of Morocco, is hot and crowded. However, today many Muslims are taking root in much colder places. Greater Toronto, probably the most multicultural city on earth, is now possibly home to more than 300,000 Muslims from many nations (statistics vary).

Canada's immigration rate is growing four times as fast as the birth rate, and well over half of all new immigrants land in Toronto. Three of the city's most densely populated high-rise apartment clusters, Thorncliffe Park, Crescent Town and Dixon Park, are overwhelmingly Muslim. Comprised of people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia, each square mile of these neighborhoods, has as many as 20,000 people stacked on top of each other. The local schools scramble to find space for the children of the newcomers. One public school now has over 1,900 students from Kindergarten to grade 5. Funds have been released for an unprecedented second school, dedicated entirely to 30 kindergarten classes! In the 2006 census the largest demographic group was children aged 0-4 years old.

These neighborhoods have been formed by low rent housing, strong family ties, *halal* shops and the hope for a prosperous future. For many families the pressures are intense. Shocking advertising campaigns assault their

sense of propriety, their kids seem to live in a different world after only a few months of adaptation, the winters are long and employment poses a huge challenge. Many from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India are foreign trained professionals. Those from Afghanistan or Somalia are usually seeking refuge from the effects of long bloody conflicts. Many have huge gaps in their education, because of the years lost as they literally fled for their lives. For all, opportunities are few and the barriers to work and provision are many. The frustrations of bringing up a large family in a new land are profound. (For more information see [www.torontomuslims.com](http://www.torontomuslims.com))

When deciding to come to Canada, few, if any, of Toronto's Muslims would have been thinking about the increased opportunities to meet or to follow Jesus Christ. In recent years, some believers have been able to proclaim to their friends the hope that they have in the Messiah. In many cases Muslims are invited for the first time to enter a Christian home. During their visits stereotypes and perceptions are either hardened or melted away. As Muslims start to see Jesus, some turn away, others are strongly attracted to him! For Muslims and Christians living alongside each other, there exists a huge potential for mutual respect, appreciation, reconciliation and love to develop between the two communities.



### ► Prayer REQUESTS

- *Pray that through the sharing of their lives and the Word of God, that the Messiah would be honored by believers who are seeking to proclaim the Good News among Toronto's Muslims.*
- *Pray that Canada's Muslims would find jobs, peace and a sense of belonging in their new country.*
- *Pray that Toronto's Muslims who are discovering the living Messiah would become a source of life and inspiration for their fellow countrymen in Canada and in their homelands.*