



Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities
Association Canadienne de Musulmans(nes) avec Handicapes

Towards an Inclusive Ummah Muslims with Disabilities Speak-Out

Report

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LEADING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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***This Report was formatted using basic print accessibility guidelines**

Executive Summary

As we are all created by Allah-Subhanahu-watalla (God, the glorious), all persons have the right to live and participate with dignity as a part of the Muslim Ummah, in our local and global Muslim communities, regardless of ability or disability.

The Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities, CAM-D, undertook the “Towards an Inclusive Ummah: Muslims with Disabilities Speak-Out,” project funded by the Olive Tree Foundation. It conducted a broad consultation with Muslims with disabilities to determine and document what issues and barriers they face within the Muslim community, in Mosques/Islamic Centres and at Muslim events.

This report illustrates the themes and patterns that have emerged and makes the following recommendations to assist CAM-D and the Muslim community leadership to develop a comprehensive action strategy to facilitate access for Muslims with disabilities in the following areas:

1. Development of services for aging parents and caregivers of individuals with intellectual disabilities, psychiatric disabilities and other disabilities.

2. Immediate facilitation of programs to help Muslim adults and children who are deaf or hard of hearing learn about and practice Islam.
3. .Development of partnerships with mainstream services.
4. Coordination and dissemination of alternate print formats.
5. Facilitation of Peer support and advocacy.
6. Accessibility audits.
7. Opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate.
8. Sensitivity training and public education.

In order to bridge these gaps, it is essential that the Muslim leadership recognize that Muslims with disabilities are present in their communities. There is a social and spiritual obligation on the leadership to ensure that Muslims with disabilities are fairly and equitably included in all aspects of Muslim community life.

Preamble

We are all created equal by Allah, the Most glorious, some of us with and some of us without disabilities. Some of us experience disability at different stages in life. Many of us indeed will experience some form of disability as we age. We are all the creation of the Sovereign, Allah, and therefore entitled to live and participate with dignity as a part of the local and global Muslim Ummah (society).

Acknowledgements

CAM-D thanks all persons with disabilities and their family members who participated in this project. CAM-D also expresses its gratitude to the advisory group who are Aseefa Sarang, Omayya Rakieh, Raffina Ali, Rafia Haniff-Cleofas, Hamida Merchant, and Brothers Ali Mohamed and Mohammed Jalaluddin. Their open and honest sharing of experiences was an invaluable contribution and much appreciated.

CAM-D recognizes the support of hosting organizations which included ISNA Canada Centre, Islamic Institute of Toronto, Jaffari Islamic Centre/Crescent Village, Masjid Toronto and the TARIC Islamic Centre.

CAM-D also acknowledges the support offered by individuals affiliated with the Imams' Coordinating Council and the Islamic Foundation as well as numerous local organizations that assisted with the outreach process. Most importantly, CAM-D thanks the support of Mihad Fahmy who volunteered her services as legal council.

Towards an Inclusive Ummah

Muslims with Disabilities Speak-out Report

Background

The Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities – CAM-D was founded by a group of active disability advocates sharing a vision “to create a global village that includes full access for persons with disabilities.” The process began with partnerships within the Muslim community. A diversity initiative for the Canadian Association for Community Living, the Ethno Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario and Providence Health Care further promoted the initiative. Muslims with disabilities and their families were repeatedly stating that there were no supports within the community; that they did not know about their rights; and that mainstream services did not respond adequately to their unique needs. Hence, CAM-D started about two years ago and formally incorporated as a not-for-profit national organization in 2006.

CAM-D’s mission is to create an inclusive society by promoting principles of accessibility that will ensure persons with disabilities have access to spiritual and social activities, events and programs in their places of worship. CAM-D wants to ensure that:

- Physical accessibility, alternative communication/Sign Language interpretation, and alternate print formats for faith based institutions are resourced and facilitated,
- Information about and needs of faith, spirituality and culture through the lived experiences of persons with disabilities is researched and promoted to leaders, service providers, governments and communities,
- Networking opportunities for persons with disabilities and their families are facilitated,
- And the development of alternative respite and independent living opportunities that meet the requirements of faith and culture, are developed.

Introduction

The “Towards an Inclusive Ummah: Muslims with Disabilities Speak-Out” project was undertaken by the Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities, CAM-D, a not-for-profit federally incorporated, consumer driven organization. The Olive Tree Foundation funded it.

A broad consultation was conducted with Muslims with disabilities to document the issues and barriers they faced within the Muslim community, in Mosques/Islamic Centres and at Muslim events.

This report identifies emerging themes and patterns and makes broad recommendations to remove barriers experienced by Muslims with disabilities and their families. CAM-D expects this report to determine a framework for a community strategic action plan and gage community responsibility toward the establishment of a sustainability model.

Methodology

A community consultation process premised on the principles of participatory action research and accessibility was designed and implemented. An advisory committee was established and consulted to assist in the design of the research tools and outreach strategies. The following approach was implemented:

- Background research was conducted. This included informal conversations with key informants and review of findings from previous projects.
- Outreach and research tools were created. These included focus group questions, electronic survey, demographic questionnaire, consent form, letter of introduction and outreach flyer. (Appendix A)
- A press-release was generated and widely circulated. (Appendix B)
- Outreach was conducted through mainstream and ethnic media, newsletters and through announcements at Friday congregational prayers at various Mosques and Islamic Centres.
- Both the electronic survey and demographic questionnaire were promoted through various virtual channels.
- Focus group participants were identified and four focus groups were held with persons with disabilities including one specifically with

Muslims who were deaf or hard of hearing.

- Data was collected and analysed.
- The report was compiled with findings and recommendations to be launched at a community press conference and reception.

Findings

When asked about barriers in accessing Mosques and Islamic Centres, participants generally reported that there was some basic accessibility in larger places of worship but there were barriers too. They indicated that:

- There was no accessible parking available. People without disabilities always parked in the disability designated spots or blocked access to the spots, curb cuts and entrances.
- Access to the elevator was limited. It could only be operated with a key from the management.
- Shoes were always in the way. This created obstructions and hazards for people with disabilities. This was especially true for individuals using wheelchairs or other walking aides.
- There was an expectation that the person with a wheelchair should not pray in the carpeted prayer area or join the congregation. People in the mosques, including management, perceived the wheelchair to be impure and dirty.

-“People get offended when I pray in the mosque in my powered chair. People do not know that I clean the chair on Fridays and I get someone to help when I arrive at the mosque. When I go to a new mosque people are not

used to seeing the wheelchair on the carpet. I've been to Mecca, Masjid Nabawi (Mosque of the Prophet) and Al-Aqsa (in my chair) and had no problems. What's the big fuss with the mosques here!"

- There was no transportation to get to the mosque easily without personally driving.
- Managing the children in mosques was difficult for persons with disabilities. The facilities were too crowded and people were not understanding.
- Finding the spouse afterwards was difficult because the facilities were too packed.
- People's attitudes toward the disability were negative and full with pity.
- When it was difficult for some individuals to move to straighten the lines for salat (congregational prayer), people insisted without understanding.
- Although there were shelves for shoes, it was always problematic finding the shoes.
- Persons who were deaf or hard of hearing were not getting the full spiritual benefit of participating because of not being able to hear the

sermon or the recitation of prayers.

- The lighting in the mosques were usually too dark and created visual difficulties.
- People's attitudes expressed verbally to others and stares discouraged individuals with disabilities and their families from attending mosques regularly.

Participants also reported barriers at Islamic events and conferences that included:

- Entrances, only the men's entrance was accessible.
- Segregation, spouse had to come to the other side to provide assistance.
- Attitudes,
 - "I avoid events... combination of disability and other things... Culture is the barrier."**
- Stigma, feeling the stares and needing to hide the disability.
 - "I disclosed an invisible disability, neurological condition, and suddenly felt people change toward me. I stopped telling and stopped going to that place."**
 - "Family find it uncomfortable using a walker, etc. Going to an Islamic event, but there is no issue if I use it"**

to take a class or volunteer program in a church.”

- Gender, male with a disability was more respected than a female.
- Financial, big events, big tickets.
- Communication, no ASL, No Islamic events or activities accommodating people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Communication, Muslims are diverse and look at disabilities differently. For example,

“Somebody touched me for luck.”

- People’s ignorance, their insistence to help.
- Lack of understanding about accessibility and accommodation. For example,

“There was segregated seating for persons with disabilities at the conference, which isolated persons with disabilities from their families and friends.”

- Transportation, no options for persons with disabilities with large families.
- Lack of compassion, insensitivity to invisible disabilities even after disclosure.
- Venue, furniture and equipment always had to be re-arranged.

Discussing programs and services within the Muslim community, participants indicated that:

- There are no programs for persons with disabilities. A family member to ensure accessibility is always necessary.
- There are no education programs for kids with disabilities.
- Since there is no accessibility for parents, parents do not participate and kids then miss out too.
- Attitudes, even though there was a program arranged for kids with disabilities, parents still did not bring their kids out in order to protect them.
- Transportation,
“I am unable to consistently participate and have to send children on their own.”
- Transportation,
“Wheeltrans came early and someone at the mosque cancelled the ride because the prayer was not done. Wheeltrans would have waited for me.”
- No alternate formats of materials.
- Attitudes,
“I told someone that I was reading the Quran using

cassettes and they said that wasn't reading the Quran, not ibada (worship)."

"As a parent with a disability, it was hard to get kids to programs."

Participants were subsequently asked to state the programs or services they would like to receive and they suggested:

- They would like to have their deaf children learn how to pray and read the Quran, sacred text, like hearing children.
- Separate classes for deaf adults to learn about Islam.
- ASL interpretation to be available in mosques, at conferences and at events.
- Financial assistance or subsidies to attend activities and events.
- Assistance with transportation.
- Accessible venues for all events and activities.
- Muslim peer support for persons with disabilities.
- Greater involvement of persons with disabilities in volunteer activities within the Muslim communities including participating on boards and committees.
- Disability awareness days in mosques.
- Social activities that include persons with disabilities and children with

disabilities.

- Attendant care at events.
- Matrimonial assistance for persons with disabilities seeking spouses.
- Alternate format of the Quran including translation.

Participants also made the following recommendations:

- Provide disability awareness raising opportunities.
- Set-up permanent committee in the mosques to facilitate the needs of persons with disabilities and to support their families.
- Provide written materials in accessible/alternate formats.
- Provide ASL interpretation.
- Establish learning opportunities for all imams/sheikhs (spiritual leaders) to learn how to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Offer educational workshops to incorporate learning about barriers in madrassa (Islamic school) programs.
- Promote the employment of persons with disabilities within the Muslim communities.

When asked to describe supports received from family and community, participants' responses included the following:

- Full support from family including respite.
- Financial resources within the family.
- Tremendous support for transportation from family.
- No support from community,

“...Lots of cursing”
- Family and friends are supportive,

“Parents were the most supportive, encouraged me to wear my glasses and not to worry about the disability.”

When discussing impact of the barriers experienced, participants explained that:

- There was no support from Muslims and more from friends of other faiths or non-faith.
- There was no opportunity to learn about Islam.
- They experienced pity,

“My baby’s deaf. The mosque people pity me. I am happy (Al-humdulillah-praise be to Allah) that my baby’s deaf.”
- They felt excluded, unimportant, not really wanted or welcomed, sense of abandonment, loneliness and isolation, not worthy.
- There was a sense that persons with disabilities could only be married to another person with a disability or because they had a

disability they did not have a need to marry.

- Accepting the disability helped get closer to Allah.
- Feeling content because disability is from Allah but the community's attitudes impact on everything negatively.
- There was a sense of disappointment with the community because they do not practice what they preach in khutbas (sermons), etc.
- There was a sense of being a charity case.

Analysis

Persons with disabilities experience barriers within the Muslim communities in the greater Toronto area. They feel a sense of exclusion because of the negative attitudes they encounter. The Muslim community leadership is largely unaware about the population of Muslims with disabilities within their jammats (congregations) and is mostly uninformed about accommodation for people with disabilities.

Based on the findings of the focus groups, e-surveys and informal interviews, the following themes and patterns emerged.

Families caring for individuals with disabilities have stated that they are unable to consider going to Hajj (pilgrimage) or Umra (the lesser pilgrimage) because they had no safe environment to leave their family members with disabilities. They also have no plans formalized for the individual's living arrangements and care for the future as they age and pass on. There are no appropriate services currently available to address this long-term need within the Islamic tradition.

Parents of children with disabilities are desperately looking for the opportunity for their children to learn to read the Quran, but there are no programs to help them. However, when one particular program was arranged through an Islamic centre, participation was limited. Given

community attitudes toward persons with disabilities, it is probable that parents had internalized the community's attitudes. They protected their children and they did not have their children participate.

At present, Muslims who are deaf or hard of hearing have no access to learning how to read the Quran or take part in any Islamic studies classes. There are no spiritual or social programs within the Muslim community that accommodate Muslims who are deaf or hard of hearing beyond one, Salat-ul-Eid (Eid prayer) congregation, where ASL interpreters are present. A deaf Muslim brother stated that his only option to learn about Islam was to be the first one in the mosque and sit right in front of the Imam (spiritual leader) and struggle to read his lips during the khutba (sermon). Hence, the burden is placed on the individual to inform the Imam (spiritual leader) about his need to lip-read and how he can be accommodated. However, Muslims who are deaf or hard of hearing have a tremendous desire to learn and practice their faith. They read books on their own and utilize family members or children to teach them. In some cases, Muslims who are deaf want very basic questions answered about Islam such as,

“After dying and going to heaven, who will I meet there?”

There is no formal provision to accommodate children or adults with disabilities requiring alternate print formats of the Quran and other learning materials. There are no Braille Qurans available for Muslims who are blind. Hiring private teachers is difficult and costly.

There is no opportunity for Muslims with intellectual disabilities to be taught anything about Islam outside of their families. There are no activities specially engaging individuals with intellectual disabilities within mosques and Islamic centres to help them incorporate basic Islamic values and rituals into their life skills development.

Only a few mosques in the greater Toronto area are wheelchair accessible. Wheelchair parking is not enforced, vehicles block the curb cut entrances, washrooms and wudu (ablution) areas are not fully accessible, and pathways are usually cluttered with shoes. There are no family washrooms to allow a family member of the opposite sex with washroom/ wudu (ablution) duties.

Attitudes of Muslims toward persons with disabilities are the greatest barrier that Muslims with disabilities encounter at Muslim gatherings and places of worship.

Muslims are not skilled in the provision of disability-related services and are not well represented in careers supporting persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward to assist CAM-D and the Muslim community leadership to develop a comprehensive action strategy to facilitate access for Muslims with disabilities:

1. Development of services for aging parents and caregivers of individuals with intellectual disabilities, psychiatric disabilities and other disabilities:

- There are immediate and long-term needs of Muslim families that need to be addressed. These include counseling, advocacy and peer support services that families need in order to maintain health and well-being of their households and caregivers.
- Aging parents and caregivers need respite and residential services in order to feel at ease about their family member being cared for within Islamic values.

2. Immediate facilitation of programs to help Muslim adults and children who are deaf or hard of hearing learn about and practice Islam:

- There are immediate needs to learn about and practice Islam that have to be facilitated for Muslim adults and children who are deaf or hard of hearing. They need ASL interpretation to be

funded and provided at weekly congregations, and regular Islamic Studies classes to be offered using ASL.

3. Development of partnerships with mainstream services:

- Persons with intellectual disabilities have the right to experience their spiritual traditions. Opportunities have to be created in partnership with mainstream service providers to allow them to experience Islam and develop relevant life skills within Islamic environments.
- Mainstream service providers need to be educated about values and traditions of Muslims with disabilities in order to facilitate culturally sensitive services.
- The Muslim community and mainstream services need to work together in order to address transportation needs.

4. Coordination and dissemination of alternate print formats:

- The provision of alternate print formats of the Quran, its translation, Islamic literature and other resources need to be coordinated and made readily available to persons with learning disabilities, who are blind or have low vision.

5. Facilitation of Peer support and advocacy:

- Peer support for families of children with disabilities and

persons with disabilities needs to be facilitated in order to enhance their spirituality, self-esteem, and sense of belonging within the Muslim community and full social inclusion.

- Information, referrals and advocacy assistance need to be provided to Muslims with disabilities and their families, especially newcomers.

6. Accessibility audits:

- Mosques and Islamic centres need to conduct accessibility audits and ensure that they are compliant with the building code standards and accessibility standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and all other federal and provincial legislation.
- They need to develop accessibility plans and ensure that they are wheelchair accessible, including washrooms and wudu (ablution) areas.
- Family washrooms should also be made available.
- Wheelchair parking must be enforced and vehicles should not block the curb cut entrances.
- All corridors and pathways must be clear of shoes since this is a potential fire hazard for those using wheelchairs.

7. Opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate:

- Islamic conferences, seminars and other educational sessions must ensure that accommodations are provided for Muslims with disabilities so they can fully participate and benefit from them.
- People with disabilities should be given opportunities to participate in leadership positions in the mosques, as was in the days of the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be on Him)¹
- Employment and work experience opportunities within the Muslim community need to be offered to persons with disabilities.

8. Sensitivity training and public education:

- In order to deal with attitudinal barriers, sensitivity training about Muslims with disabilities needs to be provided to management, staff and volunteers of the mosques and Islamic centers.
- Discussion topics at conferences need to address disability issues.

1. Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum was put in charge of Madinah by the Prophet Mohammed (pboh) in his absence. This demonstrates the tradition of inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Muslim Ummah.

- Disability awareness materials need to be distributed through the mosques and at Islamic events.
- Information related to pertinent disability-related issues and obligations within an Islamic context needs to be researched, collected and disseminated widely.
- Muslim youth need to become aware of and encouraged to pursue careers in the social services sector including **ASL Interpretation, Deaf-Blind Intervention, Attendant Care and Developmental Services.**

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that persons with disabilities within the Muslim community are isolated and families caring for persons with severe disabilities receive no support within the Muslim community. Persons with disabilities are also excluded from learning and engaging in spiritual and social activities. In order to bridge these gaps, it is essential that the Muslim leadership recognize that Muslims with disabilities are present in their communities and there is a social and spiritual obligation on the leadership to ensure that Muslims with disabilities are fairly and equitably included in all aspects of Muslim community life.

Appendix A

Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities

CAM-D

250 The East Mall, Suite 1746, Toronto, ON M9B 6L3. 416-252-8668 or 1-866-897-8668,

Email: camd@camd.ca

Towards an Inclusive Ummah: Muslims with Disabilities Speak-Out!

Are you a person with a disability or a family member of a person with a disability?

“Blind, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, intellectual disability, Learning disability, mental health issues, physical or other”



We want to hear from you about barriers that you or your family experiences as Muslims within the Community

**Focus Group Discussions on
Accessibility for Muslims with Disabilities**

Date	Time	Place
Saturday, May 6, 2006	10:00 am - 1:00 pm	Crescent Village, Richmond Hill
Sunday May 7, 2006 (ASL provided)	2:00 - 5 pm.	Masjid Toronto, Downtown
Sunday, May 14, 2006	2:00 - 5:00 pm	Islamic Institute of Toronto Scarborough
Monday May 22, 2006	2:00 - 5:00 pm	Islamic Centre of Canada (ISNA) Mississauga

Enjoy Refreshments and become a Premier Member of **CAM-D**.

Your participation is very important. RSVP 416 252-8668

Limited assistance provided for transportation & childcare

Available upon request.



Project funded by

LEADING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CAM-D Demographic Questionnaire

Confidential Once Completed

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Tel: _____ Business: _____

E-mail: _____ Cell No.: _____

Gender:

Female Male

Age:

20 or under, 21 to 35 36 to 50 51 to 65

Over 65

Participation:

Person with a disability

Family member of a person with disability

Disability:

Mobility/Physical Visual Deaf/ Hard of Hearing

Psychiatric Intellectual Learning

Other _____

Family Status:

Single Married Divorced Widowed

Immigration Status:

- Canadian Citizen Permanent Resident Refugee Other

Employment Status:

- Employed Under-Employed Unemployed Student

Education:

- Completed high school Completed college diploma/certificate
 Completed apprenticeship Completed university degree

Financial Status:

- Employment income Self-employment income
 Disability income Family income

August 1, 2006

Dear Muslim community member (Brother/Sister):

Assalam-u-alaikum! We are inviting you as a Muslim with a disability or a family member of a Muslim with a disability to help us ensure that **disability issues are put on the Muslim community's agenda.**

Although accessibility is gaining higher priority on the agenda of mainstream society, barriers are clearly present within various individual faith-based communities. Within the Muslim community, Muslims with disabilities remain isolated and families caring for people with severe disabilities receive no support by the religious community. Muslims with disabilities are also excluded from learning and engaging in spiritual and social activities.

Currently, Muslims who are deaf or hard of hearing have no access to learning how to read the Quran or take part in any Islamic studies classes. There are no

Braille Qurans readily available for Muslims who are blind. There is no opportunity for Muslims with intellectual disabilities to be taught anything about Islam outside of their families. The majority of mosques and Islamic centres in the Greater Toronto Area are not even wheelchair accessible.

“Our vision is to create a global village that includes full access for people with disabilities,” says Rabia Khedr, a founder of CAM-D (Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities). “We have the right to practice and experience our cultural and faith traditions. We have the right to be valued, respected and included in society and in our communities,” says Rafia Haniff-Cleofas, another founder of CAM-D. CAM-D is a national non-profit organization that was recently founded by a few strong disability advocates. The mission of this organization is to work towards an inclusive society by promoting principles of accessibility. The essential objectives of this organization include the following:

- To ensure that people with disabilities have access to spiritual and social activities, events and programs in their places of worship.
- To resource and facilitate physical accessibility, alternative communication/Sign Language interpretation, and alternative print formats for faith based institutions.
- To research and promote information about and needs of faith, spirituality and culture through the lived experiences of people with disabilities to leaders, service providers, governments and communities
- To facilitate networking opportunities for persons with disabilities and their families.

- To lead and support the development of alternative respite and independent living opportunities that meets the requirements of faith and culture.

Time and time again, Muslims with disabilities and/or their families state that there are no supports within the Muslim community, that they do not know about their entitlements and that mainstream services do not respond adequately to their individual religious needs as Muslims. “Parents of children with disabilities are constantly looking for the opportunity for their children to learn to read the Quran, however, there are no accessible programs available to assist them,” states Omayya Rakieh, also a founder of the organization. A deaf Muslim stated that his only option to learn about Islam was to be the first one in the mosque and sit right in front of the Imam, while struggling to read his lips during the khutbah (Friday sermon). CAM-D advocate, Ali Mohamed says that, “Our community is thinking about elevators to accommodate the able bodied carrying coffins for funeral services after having ignored us individuals with disabilities for years.” It is definitely clear to the founders of CAM-D, that the Muslim community leadership is unaware about the population of Muslims with disabilities and is uninformed about how to fulfill individual accessibility requirements.

CAM-D’s first project is already underway: *Towards an Inclusive Ummah – Muslims with Disabilities Speak Out*. This project will conduct a broad consultation with Muslims with disabilities to determine and document what issues and barriers they face within the Muslim community, in Mosques/Islamic Centres and at Muslim events. Focus groups have been held with individuals

with disabilities and their family members at Crescent Village, Masjid Toronto, and Islamic Institute of Toronto and ISNA CANADA Centre during the month of May.

In order to capture greater input from Muslims with disabilities that were unable to participate in the focus groups, CAM-D has an easy to complete electronic survey available that can be emailed upon request. It can also be completed over the telephone in order to ensure access. The output of this project will be a report that will be printed and disseminated to Muslim leaders, to ensure that accessibility is no longer ignored and is a priority on the community agenda.

For more information about CAM-D, to request an electronic survey or to complete the survey over the telephone, please contact CAM-D via voicemail at 416-252-8668 or by email at camd_info@yahoo.ca.

CAM-D E-Survey:

This information is confidential. Your name will not be used in any resulting reports and will not be associated with your particular responses in this data collection process.

Please complete this survey by August 31, 2006 and e-mail it to camd_info@yahoo.ca or mail it to the CAM-D address above.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Telephone #: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please indicate your responses accurately to the following questions.

Please note that if you were completing this survey on behalf of a person with a disability that requires assistance in expressing themselves, we would appreciate it if you would also provide your contact information

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Telephone #: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please self-identify as appropriate by writing or typing a “Y” for yes or an “N” for no next to the question:

1. Are you Muslim? ___
2. Are you a person with a disability ___?
3. Are you living in the Greater Toronto Area? ___
4. Are you employed? ___
5. Are you a student? ___
6. Are you married? ___
7. Do you face barriers because of your disability? ___
8. Do you go to the mosque? ___
9. Do you participate in Muslim community events and activities such as annual conferences, Eid bazaars and festivals? ___
10. Do you experience barriers when going to the mosque or attending Muslim community events and activities? ___
11. Do you feel you are meeting your spiritual needs and obligations? ___
12. Do you want to learn more about Islam but do not have the opportunity because of the barriers you experience? ___
13. Do you want to participate more in mosques and Muslim community activities? ___

14. Indicate the type of disability you have by writing or typing an “X” in front of your response(s):

Blindness/low vision: ___

Deaf/hard of hearing: ___

Developmental/intellectual disability: ___

Learning disability: ___

Mental health/psychiatric disability: ___

Physical disability: ___

Other invisible disabilities (Specify): ___

15. Indicate the barriers you experience when going to the mosque or attending Muslim community events and activities as appropriate by writing or typing an “X” in front of your response(s):

Attitudes of the organizers and the people responsible feeling that a wheelchair should not come in the masjid: ___

Attitudes of other Muslims present looking and staring: ___

Physical barriers like stairs and narrow doorways: ___

Availability of accessible parking: ___

Communication barriers like not hearing or understanding the speech

Other barriers (Specify): ___

16. Please indicate any additional comments or suggestions: ___

Appendix B

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2006

It's about time that disability issues are put on the Muslim community's agenda

TORONTO —Today, although accessibility is gaining higher priority on the agenda of mainstream society, barriers are clearly present within various individual faith-based communities. Within the Muslim community, Muslims with disabilities remain isolated and families caring for people with severe disabilities receive no support by the religious community. Muslims with disabilities are also excluded from learning and engaging in spiritual and social activities.

Currently, Muslims who are deaf or hard of hearing have no access to learning how to read the Quran or take part in any Islamic studies classes. There are no Braille Qurans readily available for Muslims who are blind. There is no opportunity for Muslims with intellectual disabilities to be taught anything about Islam outside of their families. The majority of mosques and Islamic centres in the Greater Toronto Area are not even wheelchair accessible.

“Our vision is to create a global village that includes full access for people with disabilities,” says Rabia Khedr, a founder of CAM-D (Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities). “We have the right to practice and experience our cultural and faith traditions. We have the right to be valued, respected and

included in society and in our communities,” says Rafia Haniff-Cleofas, another founder of CAM-D. CAM-D is a national non-profit organization that was recently founded by a few strong disability advocates. The mission of this organization is to work towards an inclusive society by promoting principles of accessibility. The essential objectives of this organization include the following:

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- To resource and facilitate physical accessibility, alternative communication/Sign Language interpretation, and alternative print formats for faith based institutions.
- To research and promote information about and needs of faith, spirituality and culture through the lived experiences of people with disabilities to leaders, service providers, governments and communities
- To facilitate networking opportunities for persons with disabilities and their families.
- To lead and support the development of alternative respite and independent living opportunities that meets the requirements of faith and culture.

Time and time again, Muslims with disabilities and/or their families state that there are no supports within the Muslim community, that they do not know about their entitlements and that mainstream services do not respond adequately to their individual religious needs as Muslims. “Parents of children with disabilities are constantly looking for the opportunity for their children to learn to read the

Quran, however, there are no accessible programs available to assist them,” states Omayya Rakieh, also a founder of the organization. A deaf Muslim stated that his only option to learn about Islam was to be the first one in the mosque and sit right in front of the Imam, while struggling to read his lips during the khutbah (Friday sermon). CAM-D advocate, Ali Mohamed says that, “Our community is thinking about elevators to accommodate the able bodied carrying coffins for funeral services after having ignored us individuals with disabilities for years.” It is definitely clear to the founders of CAM-D, that the Muslim community leadership is unaware about the population of Muslims with disabilities and are uninformed about how to fulfill individual accessibility requirements.

CAM-D’s first project is already underway: *Towards an Inclusive Ummah – Muslims with disabilities speak out*. This project will conduct a broad consultation with Muslims with disabilities to determine and document what issues and barriers they face within the Muslim community, in Mosques/Islamic Centres and at Muslim events. Focus groups will be held with individuals with disabilities and their family members at Crescent Village, Masjid Toronto, Islamic Institute of Toronto and ISNA Canada Centre during the month of May. The output of this project will be a report that will be printed and disseminated to Muslim leaders, to ensure that accessibility is no longer ignored and is a priority on the community agenda.

Contact Information

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