



**Progressive Action for Community Empowerment  
Community Meeting**

20 September 2014

Access Point, Danforth, Toronto

**Draft Report**

On September 20th, 2014, PACE hosted a community meeting. The objectives of the meeting were to give community members an update on the progress of PACE projects and to get some insights from public representative and community leaders on issues related to community development.

PACE also wanted to bring together a variety of community members to learn about and identify opportunities for supporting and expanding active and sustainable community empowerment initiatives. The agenda began with an overview of PACE and the background and context of why community empowerment matters. Over 50 community members actively participated in the meeting. The meeting's agenda is enclosed in Appendix A. Guest speakers, discussants and few community leaders in the meeting shared their insights and responded to the questions of participants.

**Guests Speakers:**

1. Janet Davis, City Councillor, Ward 31, Beaches- East York.
2. Matthew Kellway, Member of the Parliament, Beaches-East York.

**Discussants:**

1. Mahmudul Anam, Professor, Economics, York University.
2. Mahbubul Alam, Community Leader & former UN staff member.

**Opening Remarks:** Emamul Haque, Chairman of PACE provided opening remarks. He welcomed the speakers and the participants. He underscored the importance of collaboration between the different orders of government including municipal, provincial and federal to ensure successful community building. He also mentioned that PACE would like to continue organizing community meetings in the coming months to better understand the concerns of the community with an aim to address the issues raised in a comprehensive manner.

***PACE Mission, Vision and Proposed Activities***

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Priyanka Debnath, Director - Strategic Partnerships of PACE discussed about PACE's principles, its mission and its vision. She mentioned that PACE's mission is to inspire people for social prosperity while its vision is a society where everyone holds the power

to create opportunities for themselves and others. She also highlighted and discussed about the journey that PACE wishes to embark in the short and the long run.

Nusrat Jahan, Member of PACE presented the PACE's ongoing initiatives:

- **ACT (Active Citizens' Thread)** - Inspiring people to act and become responsive citizen;
- **CONNECT** - Empowering Community Members through Interactive Meetings/Session

She also highlighted the proposed activities as:

- **Action Research:** To identify community assets and deficiencies, strengthens and opportunities.
- **Youth Engagement Program:** Engage and encourage adolescents and youth in community development through creative works.
- **Corporate engagement and corporate social responsibility:** Sensitize and mobilize corporate sector in community engagement.

### ***Presentation by Janet Davis (City Councillor, Ward 31, Beaches- East York)***

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Janet congratulated the board of PACE. She mentioned that she was impressed to know about the values, mission and vision of PACE. She expressed interest in supporting PACE's objectives.

Her presentation, titled, "Municipal Council Governance & Councillors' Executive Power" detailed the roles and responsibility of the municipal, provincial and federal government. She highlighted her role as a Councillor in ensuring that community voices are given importance in the decision-making process of the City of Toronto. She described about the standing committees, their effectiveness and how community members can participate in the decision-making process at the municipal level. Janet encouraged everyone to participate in the discussions at the 'City Hall' and to make the local government more transparent and accountable.

She shared her webpage link (<http://www.councillordavis.com>) where she posts the timings of the city council events/meetings. She also welcomes community members to email her ([councillor\\_davis@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_davis@toronto.ca)) with their questions and concerns related to the City Council and local government. She concluded by wishing PACE and its board a successful journey.

### ***Presentation by Matthew Kellway (Member of the Parliament, Beaches- East York)***

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Mathew Kellway started his speech by expressing his appreciation for the works of PACE. In his presentation titled, “Effective Community Participation in Government Decision Making”, he highlighted how communities could voice their opinions to their federal leaders.

He emphasised on community engagement– which comes through a collective approach and can bring effective results. Mathew mentioned some specific issues including:

- International Mother Language Day: He is working on a private members’ bill to raise broader awareness about the International Mother Language Day.
- Youth Engagement: He emphasized on the importance of engaging youth at an early age on community projects and activities.
- Sustainability Network: He welcomed PACE’s approach to ensure knowledge sharing and network.
- Elected Members: It is incredibly important that elected Members of the Parliament have participation in the community level discussions. He thanked PACE for inviting political leaders like himself and Janet to present at the meeting.

Matthew concluded by congratulating the board of PACE and wished them the very best for all of PACE’s future activities.

### ***Group Discussions by the Participants***

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The participants were divided into groups and discussed about community issues. They identified the following issues and suggested PACE to address these further:

- a) **Teen and Youth’s cultural values:** Awareness creation for teen-agers and youths on protecting their respective social and cultural values.
- b) **Mainstream politics:** There is lack of participation or non-involvement in mainstream politics. Therefore, information and awareness regarding politics may be helpful.
- c) **Elderly:** To work for the seniors to create a just society.
- d) **Job Opportunities:** In the context of lack of appropriate job opportunities, PACE can create awareness and organize education sessions on proper career planning strategies and second career options.
- e) **Visa for family members:** To sponsor the family members in Canada, a health insurance is required, which is high (e.g. CAD 1,500 for three months’ visa of a family member). It is a federal issue and can be brought up to discuss for alternative ways with low cost.

- f) **Domestic violence:** Community needs greater awareness and user-friendly crisis support provision.
- g) **Resource allocation:** Disproportionate resource allocation among different areas/communities was discussed. For example: size of a playground in one area with a certain number of people is not the same compared with a different area with similar population size.
- h) **Safe pedestrian:** Safe pedestrian is required for children and seniors.
- i) **TTC Bus services:** Communities should be served better through more frequent and comprehensive bus services.
- j) **Informed Decision Choice:** Before immigrating to Canada, people are not properly informed about the employment opportunities in Canada in line with their education and experience. To help people to make an informed choice, PACE can operate a hotline or interactive email system to provide information through facts and figures to the prospective immigrants at the country of origin.
- k) **Lack of Information:** Despite the availability of existing services new comers lack appropriate information regarding the employment, housing, financial rules (CRA), investments, etc.

### *Open Discussion*

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The participants highlighted the following points:

1. Often community members are not sure how to reach public representatives on certain issues.
  - In response to that, Janet reiterated the process of municipal level decision-making and encouraged everyone to participate in the discussions at the 'City Hall'. She also mentioned that local government is committed to do better always.
2. A partnership is required between local government and PACE.
3. 'Child Care Support' is an important area where community need to make sure that people have right kind of services/support. Such supports help parents to get a rewarding employment or to upgrade themselves to create better opportunities.

There are some immediate services required for new comers.

- For example:
- Health services in first three months;
  - Renting a house without a guarantor.

4. Connect people with accurate and updated information, which are easily accessible and not misleading.
5. There are many non-profit organizations in the community and they should work together. PACE can think of collaborative projects with the organizations who share the same vision.
6. Social awareness on various issues can be created through utilizing the strengths of cultural events/ performances.
7. To identify the actual need of the community, data and market search is required.
8. PACE needs to make partnership with other community based organizations to maximize the impact and to get expected results.
9. Social policies need to be task oriented and tasks need to be action oriented. This calls for strong ties between community and policy makers.
10. PACE needs to make successful immigrants visible and engage them in the process to share their knowledge and inspire others.

### ***Social Enterprise / Partners' Initiative***

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Beautiful tapestries and handicraft items of 'Gaon Swapna' ([www.gaonswapna.com](http://www.gaonswapna.com)) were also exhibited at the venue. PACE is partnering with MRDI ([www.mrdibd.org](http://www.mrdibd.org)) to support vulnerable women of 'Gaon Swapna' in Bangladesh who produce hand-stitched fancy item for living. PACE has put up this exhibition to help women in marketing their products in Canada. All profits from the sale would go to Gaon Swapna.

### ***Volunteers' Contribution***

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PACE is indebted to its Volunteers who worked hard for the event. They helped in welcoming participants in reception booth, registering the new members, selling the partners' handicrafts on behalf of PACE, taking notes of the event, decorating the venue and serving refreshments for the participants. Special thanks conveyed to all of the Volunteers who supported actively to make the event lively.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks.

**Progressive Action for Community Empowerment  
Inception Meeting & Members Orientation**

Date: Saturday 20, 2014

Time: 10:30 am - 1:30 pm

Location: Access Point, 3079 Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON M1L 1A8

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**AGENDA**

- 10:30 am: Registration and Networking
- 11:00 am: Welcome and Opening Remarks, by Emamul Haque
- 11:05 am: Ice Breaker – Brainstorming game for participants
- 11:20 am: Presentation – PACE mission, vision and proposed activities  
by Priyanka Debnath & Nusrat Jahan
- 11:35 am: Open discussion
- 11:55 am: Municipal Council Governance & Councillors' Executive Power  
Speaker: Janet Davis, City Councillor, Ward 31, Beaches- East York
- 12:10 pm: Effective Community Participation in Government Decision Making  
Speaker: Matthew Kellway, MP, Beaches- East York
- 12:25 pm: Discussants- Mahmudul Anam, Professor, Economics, York University
- 12:30pm: Discussants- Mahbubul Alam, community leader & former UN staff  
member
- 12:35 pm: Open discussion & partners perspective
- 12:55 pm: Vote of thanks, by Abu Mohsin
- 01:00 pm: Refreshment/Lunch