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Shelburne?s first Imam

OUR READERS WRITE

Imam Yehya Soliman has established the first ever Mosque in the history of Dufferin County and is the first ever Imam as well as Leader of the Muslim community in Dufferin Country.

Imam Yehya's prodigious and extremely impressive dedication and admirable passion in embracing, celebrating and sharing multiculturalism is done so with a place of deep understanding as the Imam comes from a bilingual, Egyptian (Arab), Muslim background.

He is a senior council member in the National Canadian Council of Imams where they hold monthly meetings, press releases, seminars and conferences in the council bringing most of the Imams together, uniting them, and uniting different communities on many issues, including discriminatory and inequitable cultural difference issues that are very prominent in the Muslim communities.

Imam Yehya's role includes the advocacy for the acceptance and embracement of cultural, ethical and linguistic differences in Muslim communities.

The National Canadian Council of Imams has also filled a vacuum with the different levels of Government and has been the principal liaison throughout the nation.

For example, in January of 2020 Imam Yehya was one of the seven Imams invited to the Parliament Hill on NCCM'S National Advocacy Day to advocate for stronger measures to combat online hate related to racism, religion and cultural matters.

Besides a number of cultural and religious policy changes in the CCI, Imam Yehya's continuous advocacy and efforts have led to the permanent establishment and recognition of the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia by the Government of Canada.

The Imam has also initiated and hosted a number of ?Welcome Ramadan? events in which individuals from all backgrounds and cultures were invited to speak on their perspectives, understanding and celebration of the month.

The feedback from the Muslim community in Dufferin County was overwhelmingly incredible as they were able to see the differences around them in a new light. Additionally, in summer of 2020 Imam Yehya was invited to the Anti-Black Racism, Anti-Racism and Discrimination Task Force to speak about his experiences and recommendations to Shelburne, which included a powerful message that ?Actions Speak Louder Than Words?.

He emphasized the need for diversity and safety in workplaces, recognition of all minorities, ensuring policies are enforced, ensuring people are heard and that all council members are acknowledging the cultural differences in the town of Shelburne and all over Dufferin County.

Imam Yehya was also on a call with the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that involved faith leaders from all cultural and religious backgrounds. In this meeting Imam Yehya spoke about religion meeting culture, how they affect each other, what as a faith leader he is doing to ensure people of all cultures are comfortable in their faith spaces and also made suggestions and a number of recommendations on multiculturalism and how it can be supported by the government, specifically, in the more rural areas like the Dufferin County.

Imam Yehya is also a part of the Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force that hosts several events besides social media posts and senior member meetings, that cater to the different cultural populations in the Muslim Community.

For example, the Imam was a guest in one event titled ?Understanding the COVID-19 Vaccines? that catered to the Arab population and helped them understand the vaccines from a more religious and cultural perspective.

From being on several meetings with Canadian politicians, to supporting different religious and cultural communities, to local awareness (events, local stores, invitations, activities, social media), to working for matters significant to different cultures, to religious and cultural services the Imam has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate incredible and outstanding commitment to ensure that the community is inclusive, respectful and welcoming for all through involvement in various activities, events, and boards of management.

He evidently embraces the differences, diversity and linguistic duality in the Dufferin County and leads by example through volunteering personal time to foster an environment that is conducive to empowerment, engagement and commitment both in the Mosque and community around him.

Muslims of Dufferin