

# Groups need to practise 'interculturalism,' Copps says

BY JESSICA ROWLANDS  
Special

Canada's cultural communities need to break out of their shells and interact with the rest of Canadian society, heritage minister Sheila Copps told a Markham audience celebrating Pakistan National Day.

"We need to move beyond multiculturalism to interculturalism," said Ms Copps, who was speaking Sunday at the Crystal Fountain Banquet Hall on 14th Avenue.

"The next challenge is about building bridges (not walls); that's what's truly Canadian."

The event, which raised \$31,000 for the Markham Stouffville Hospital, was attended by a who's who of local politicians — five Liberal MPs including revenue minister Elinor Caplan and junior finance minister John McCallum. Bryon Wilfert, whose Oak Ridges riding includes Whitchurch-Stouffville, York Region chairman Bill Fisch, Markham mayor Don Cousens and Pakistan Consul General Iftikhar Arain.

Ms Copps encouraged the 850 guests to disregard cultural scaremongering and influence the media to show the abundance of diversity in Canada.

She also encouraged greater dialogue amongst the nation's religious groups as well as the teaching of world religions in schools — all in an effort to build cultural bridges in the post-Sept. 11 world.

"I thought Ms Copps' speech was fabulous, her advice was good and everybody loved it," said Markham Ward 7 councillor Khalid Usman, who helped organize the event.

"I think her challenge to the community was a highlight."

Money raised from the dinner was more than enough to buy the hospital a piece of cardiovascular equipment called a Life Pack Physio Control.

Another speaker — Haroon Siddiqui, the Toronto Star's editorial page editor emeritus — told the audience that actions, not race or religious affiliation, should be how people are judged.

"Ordinary Canadian citizens have nothing to do with terrorism," said Mr. Siddiqui, who was honoured during the dinner for his journalistic work against

discrimination.

Mr. Siddiqui noted Pakistani Canadians have been discriminated against since the U.S. terrorist attacks.

Despite this, he encouraged the audience to, "Make the community a better place for yourselves and for all of us. Individual success comes before group success."

Also honoured for their work were community activists Muhammad

Abbas Ali and wife Sarwar Abbas.

They opened a fitness centre, a food bank and are working to build a Pakistan senior centre in Scarborough.

"I was really excited with the spirit that was shown by the dinner volunteers, donors and guests," said Councillor Usman.

"It just shows the community was excited to have so many people associated with a good cause."



SHEILA COPPS: Heritage minister speaks at Markham Pakistan National Day celebrations.

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## Charges laid after IGA deposits stolen

A 44-year-old Markham woman faces charges after \$25,000 in cash deposits disappeared from an IGA on Hwy. 7 in Unionville.

Store bookkeepers noticed the loss of three deposit bags over the months of December, January and February, said York Regional Police Const. Steve Morrell.

"These were daily deposits and the bookkeeping people noticed one day's receipts missing from each month," Const. Morrell said. "They conducted an internal investigation and then called us."

A former employee who left the job about the same time the last bag went missing was the focus of the police probe, he said.

The Markham woman was arrested Wednesday and charged with theft over \$5,000.

She appears in court May 8.

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