Municipal Communication Strategies and Ethnic Media:

A Settlement Service in Disguise [*]

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Abstract:

The Canadian Federation of Municipalities has declared cities the "unofficial welcome wagon" for new Canadians. Research suggests, however, that they embrace settlement and integration policies to varying degrees. While scholarly examinations of municipal policies include analyses of corporate communications strategies, efforts by city governments to reach residents through ethnocultural news media have received little attention. To address that gap, this study investigates why the suburban community of Brampton, Canada adopted one of the most proactive ethnic media strategies in the country in 2015 when, just a decade earlier, it was for the most part unresponsive to the needs of its burgeoning immigrant population. As a starting point, the case study uses the determinants of municipal responsiveness identified by Kristin R. Good (2009) in *Municipalities and Multiculturalism: The Politics of Immigration in Toronto and Vancouver*. Employing a mixed methods approach, it concludes that rapid demographic change, the emergence of an activist political leadership, and efforts to reduce friction between newcomers and other residents influenced Brampton's communications policy over time. The case study identifies challenges associated with adopting an ethnic media strategy, including issues related to translation and the relative lack of sophistication of some ethnic media outlets. Furthermore, it demonstrates that reaching out to ethnocultural communities via ethnic media requires more than just distributing news releases in English. Translation of these releases has the potential to increase municipal news coverage in ethnic media, the paper suggests, if only because it makes it easier for smaller news organizations to report on such matters.

Keywords: Advertising; Backlash; Cities; Communications Policy; Ethnic Media; Immigrants; Media Monitoring; Municipalities; Translation

Résumé:

La Fédération canadienne des municipalités a déclaré les villes comme étant la "terre d'accueil non-officielle" des nouveaux Canadiens. La recherche suggère, cependant, qu'ils embrassent les politiques d'habitation et d'intégration à des degrés divers. Alors que les examens scientifiques de politiques municipales comprennent des analyses de stratégies de communication d'entreprise, les efforts déployés par les instances municipales pour rejoindre les résidents à travers les médias ethnoculturelles ont reçu peu d'attention. Pour combler cette lacune, cet article examine pourquoi la communauté de Brampton au Canada a adopté l'une des stratégies les plus proactives de médias ethniques dans le pays en 2015 quand, à peine une décennie plus tôt, ne répondait pas, pour la majeure partie, aux besoins de l'éclosion de la population immigrée. Comme point de départ, l'étude de cas utilise les déterminants de la réactivité municipale identifiés par Kristin R. Good (2009) dans *Municipalities and Multiculturalism: The Politics of Immigration in Toronto and Vancouver*. Employant une approche utilisant des méthodes mixtes, il conclut que le changement démographique rapide, l'émergence d'un leadership politique militant, et les efforts pour réduire la friction entre les nouveaux arrivants et les autres résidents ont influencé la politique de communication de Brampton au fil du temps. L'étude de cas identifie les défis associés à l'adoption d'une stratégie de médias ethniques, y compris les questions liées à la traduction et le manque relatif de sophistication de certains médias ethniques. En outre, il démontre que de tendre la main aux communautés ethnoculturelles via les médias ethniques exige plus qu'une distribution de communiqués de presse en anglais. Le document suggère que la traduction de ces versions a le potentiel d'augmenter la couverture des nouvelles municipal dans les médias ethniques puisqu'elle rend plus facile aux petites organisations de presse de produire un rapport sur ces questions.

Mots-clés: Contrecoup; Immigrants; Média ethnique; Municipalités; Politique de communication; Publicité; Surveillance des médias; Traduction; Villes

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Introduction

Each year, Canada's major metropolitan centres become home to thousands of immigrants embarking upon new lives. In the City of Toronto and the surrounding suburban communities, 46 percent of the population or 2,537,400 people are foreign born. Immigrants accounted for 40 percent of the total population in the Vancouver census metropolitan area, 22.6 percent in the case of Montreal and 19.4 percent of Ottawa-Gatineau residents (Statistics Canada, 2011b).

Canada's federal government is formally responsible for choosing and admitting most newcomers, but over time it has signed agreements that give provincial governments a role in immigrant selection and settlement (Tossutti, 2012). While recent arrivals receive information on various federal and provincial settlement services, almost every aspect of their new reality is

influenced to some extent by municipalities. Local governments have jurisdiction over construction permits for homes that immigrants might want to purchase, the location of retail outlets and rental accommodation, zoning regulations that govern where businesses can set up shop, road maintenance, leisure and recreational services, the quality of public transit, and where religious institutions can be built.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has declared:

> Canadian municipalities are at the very heart of immigrant experience in Canada. Cities are the unofficial welcome wagon, directly and indirectly providing services, and delivering a quality of life that is essential to creating welcoming communities and ensuring the success of new Canadians.
>
> (Maytree Foundation, 2013: 3)

Researchers who have inventoried and compared how welcoming Canadian cities really are, however, have determined that municipalities embrace settlement and integration policies to varying degrees (Andrew et al., 2012; Good, 2009; Tossutti, 2012). Scholars have highlighted best practices ranging from the availability of city library books in languages other than French and English, to the provision of multilingual programs at local public health units (Siemiatycki, 2012). While corporate communications policies, including the translation of key city documents into non-official languages, have also been examined (Tossutti, 2012), municipal government efforts to reach residents through ethnocultural news media have received little attention to date. This paper uses a case study approach in an attempt to address that gap: it asks why the suburban community of Brampton, Canada moved in 2015 to adopt one of the most proactive ethnic media strategies in the country when, just a decade earlier, it was for the most part unresponsive to the needs of its rapidly increasing immigrant population (Good, 2009).

The first section reviews literature on the role of ethnocultural/ethnic media—defined in this case as news media produced by and for immigrants and linguistic, ethnic, and racial minorities—in the settlement and integration process. It also outlines factors that determine the extent to which municipalities embrace policies that help immigrants settle and feel a part of their adopted communities. The subsequent methodology section outlines the mixed methods approach used in the case study, an approach that includes an interview with the city's communications chief, document analysis, and a content analysis of the *Canadian Punjabi Post*, a Brampton-based Punjabi-language newspaper. The determinants of municipal responsiveness to ethnocultural change identified by Good (2009), and her characterization of Brampton as unresponsive based on her 2004 fieldwork are the starting point for analyzing changes in the city's communications strategy over a ten-year period. The reasons for the changes are investigated and Brampton's successes, failures, and lessons learned are identified.

Literature Review

Research suggests ethnocultural news media can help immigrants settle into and become a part of their new communities in a variety of ways. In the first instance, online sites and local ethnic newspapers, radio, and television programs make locally relevant news and information available to newcomers who may not follow news published in English or French, Canada's two official languages. One survey of Chinese immigrants in and around the cities of Toronto and

Vancouver, for instance, found that 52 percent of respondents read Chinese-language newspapers and magazines exclusively (Fairchild Television, 2007).

Ethnic media are also a way to communicate targeted information to the people who need it the most. An investigation of immigrants' awareness of and access to settlement services in York Region, north of Toronto, for instance, found that less than one-third of respondents knew about and actually used such services. The study's authors recommended that "extra efforts be made to reach out to recent immigrants in a culturally sensitive way beyond the information packages they are given upon landing" (Lo et al., 2010: 29).

More generally, scholars have identified eight categories of information they consider essential to thriving communities, including information about emergencies, education, health and welfare, local transportation, economic opportunities, the local environment, and civic and political information relevant to local life (Friedland et al., 2012). Ethnic media that equip newcomers and others with key information related to these topics help them "navigate unknown and foreign territories" (Zhou & Cai, 2002: 435).

At a more symbolic level, ethnocultural news organizations that provide viewers, readers, and listeners with local news in particular can also help foster a sense of belonging. In his examination of the historic role newspapers played in the formation of nations, for instance, Benedict Anderson suggests that the stories and images they published allowed readers to vicariously meet people and attend events and, therefore, collectively feel part of what he calls an "imagined" community (1991: 6). The same dynamic, others have argued, applies at the city level in that "the simultaneous consumption or 'imagining' of the stories in local newspapers" forges a shared understanding of community norms and issues (Paek, Yoon & Shah, 2005: 590). Municipalities that make city-related news readily available to ethnic media, therefore, are doing more than just acquainting newcomers with facts about services, programs, and local issues. If stories based on those news releases and communiqués are indeed broadcast or published, they help people feel part of the community because, as stated by Tuan: "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (1977: 6).

Having said that, the extent to which the journalists who work for ethnic media are willing to publish or broadcast city hall-related news will depend at least in part on what they see as their role. Research suggests that ethnic media offer their audiences content that differs from the news agenda of mainstream news organizations (Husband, 2005). In many cases the coverage counters the underrepresentation or misrepresentation of immigrants and visible minorities in mainstream coverage (Houssein, 2013; Mahtani, 2001). Voters who read the ethnic press, for instance, are likely to find out more about in-group candidates in Canadian federal elections from their own ethnocultural news sources than they will from the mainstream media (Lindgren, 2014).

Fleras, meanwhile, has suggested that ethnic media can actually play a dual role by acting, as he puts it, as both "pockets of insularity yet pathways to integration" (2011: 247). Stories that celebrate the success of community members and provide information about the ethnocultural group that is otherwise unavailable, he argues, provide a form of "bonding social capital" that can promote insularity but also strengthen ties among community members (Ibid: 246). Ethnic media can also, however, provide "bridging" or integrative social capital (Ibid: 246) in the form of stories that champion the interests of the group and equip audience members with the information they need to engage with broader society. While other factors such as standards of professional practice and the financial viability of a news outlet will also come into play, the

balance journalists strike between their role as instruments of "cultural preservation" and as agents of "societal incorporation" (Fleras, 2009: 727) may determine the success or failure of municipal outreach efforts via the ethnic news outlets.

Making Municipal News Available to Ethnic Media

Disseminating municipal news through ethnocultural media, typically the purview of municipal government communications departments, can take the form of press releases, communiqués, and information backgrounders. In practical terms, initiatives can be as basic as ensuring the outlets are on a list of news organizations that regularly receive press releases and other announcements. A more comprehensive policy might include translating press releases from English or French into the languages of the city's largest ethnic groups; hiring an ethnic media coordinator who speaks and reads one or more of those languages to work with journalists from ethnic news organizations; and engaging a service that monitors ethnocultural media content. Developing a policy on the placement of city advertising in ethnocultural media can also be part of a comprehensive strategy. Indeed, many of these news organizations are small, operate on shoestring budgets and, in some cases, see government advertising as a financial lifeline (Heritage Canada, 2013).

Just how far municipalities go in adopting these and other immigration and settlement strategies depends on a number of factors. Lack of money is one hindrance "given that such activities almost inevitably imply some new expenditures" (Andrew et al., 2012: 322). Good (2009), in her examination of the politics of immigrant integration and settlement in the Greater Toronto Area and the Greater Vancouver Area, highlighted the importance of political leadership. She categorized eight municipalities' willingness to embrace multiculturalism and other integrative polices as responsive, somewhat responsive, or unresponsive. The most responsive cities, she found, had activist politicians who downplayed and worked around jurisdictional obstacles that impeded the introduction of municipal settlement services. By comparison, leaders in cities she deemed unresponsive insisted that immigration, immigrant settlement services, and the attendant costs were the sole responsibility of the federal government and not something that municipalities should or could pursue (Ibid, 2009).

Good (2009) also pointed to demographics as a significant factor in determining responsiveness. She concluded that biracial municipalities, which she defined as those where a single group accounts for more than 50 percent of the visible minority population, tend to be more responsive because municipal leaders often have had to address growing tensions between the newcomers and longer-term residents. A backlash among more established residents, she noted, tends to galvanize members of the targeted ethnic group who demand a municipal response. Consequently, she observes, "the new community dynamics in many biracial municipalities create incentives for local political leaders to intervene" (Ibid: 218).

Exactly this situation arose in 1995 when the deputy mayor of the suburban community of Markham, Ontario made negative comments about the city's growing concentration of Chinese residents. The remarks, perceived as racist by the Chinese community, sparked outrage that led to the appointment of a special task force to investigate the matter. The city subsequently adopted a number of initiatives, ranging from a dispute resolution process for interethnic conflicts among neighbours, to diversity training opportunities for municipal staff. Markham, as a result, earned a "somewhat responsive" ranking in Good's study (Good, 2009: 80).

In contrast, cities that Good (2009) identified as multiracial (those with multiple visible minority groups but no single one that accounted for more than 50 percent of the visible minority population) were in most cases deemed unresponsive to immigrant needs. One reason for this, she suggests, is that it is less likely tensions will develop between immigrants and the established population in these municipalities: "Backlash against immigration seems less likely in heterogenous, multiracial municipalities—that is, those in which the perception is missing that a single immigrant group is redefining the municipality's cultural norms", she noted (Ibid: 221). Unresponsive municipalities also tended to be characterized by a local political leadership that viewed immigration-related services as a federal rather than municipal responsibility. Finally, there tended to be less pressure on local government to meet newcomer needs in multiracial cities because differences and divisions among the numerous immigrant groups made it difficult for them to establish a common front.

Methodology

In his classic guide to case study research, Yin (2014) said the case study approach is justified when a researcher is asking a "how" or "why" question about a complex social phenomenon. The research, he noted, should also involve real-world, contemporary events, and go beyond the conventional examination of historical documents to include interviews with people involved in those events. This study fits all of Yin's criteria. It investigates why the City of Brampton, identified in 2004 as being unresponsive to the needs of its increasingly diverse population (Good, 2009), evolved to the point where it adopted one of Canada's most proactive municipal ethnic media strategies in 2015.

The framework for examining the transformation of Brampton's policy is drawn from Kristin R. Good's (2009) *Municipalities and Multiculturalism: The Politics of Immigration in Toronto and Vancouver*. Good's 2004 fieldwork led her to conclude that Brampton officials were unresponsive to ethnocultural change in the city. This finding, and the factors Good identified as influencing municipal responsiveness to diverse populations in general, are the starting point for analyzing Brampton's dealings with ethnic media over the subsequent decade. A mixed method approach is used to chart the influence of demographic change, new political leadership, and shifts in how newcomers and established Brampton residents regard each other. Changes to the municipality's communications policy were tracked using city council, committee, and other documents. Newspaper reports were examined for indications of growing friction between the city's long-time residents and the burgeoning population of newcomers from India's Punjab region. In addition, Brampton's acting director of strategic communications, Mariann Gordon, was interviewed for her perspective on lessons learned and best practices. Gordon has worked in the city's communications branch since 2007 and in corporate communications for 25 years. Finally, a content analysis of the Brampton-based newspaper, *Canadian Punjabi Post*, was undertaken to establish the extent to which that daily newspaper covered city hall-related news in 2011.

Content Analysis Methodology

The *Canadian Punjabi Post* was selected for content analysis because it is one of the higher profile Punjabi-language newspapers serving readers in Brampton (Bascaramurty, 2013, July 27). In 2011, the locally owned and operated publication appeared six days per week, and had a

daily circulation of between 14,000 and 18,000 (Lindgren, 2013). After English, Punjabi is the most frequently spoken language in Brampton, where more than 17 percent of the population or 91,345 people list it as their mother tongue (*Table 1*).

Table 1: **Brampton's Language Landscape**

Mother Tongue	Population	Percentage
English	269,790	51.72%
Punjabi	91,345	17.51%
Urdu	14,580	2.79%
Portuguese	11,095	2.13%
Gujarati	11,040	2.12%
Spanish	10,225	1.96%
Hindi	10,060	1.93%
Tamil	9,530	1.83%
Tagalog	8,785	1.68%
Italian	7,990	1.53%
Polish	4,785	0.92%

Source: (Statistics Canada, 2012)

The *Post* was one of three newspapers analyzed for a project that investigated the amount and subject matter of local news reporting about the Greater Toronto Area (which includes Brampton) by the ethnic press. In addition to the *Post,* data was assembled on local news content in the *Korea Times Daily*, which appears six days per week in Korean, and *Russian Express*, a Russian-language weekly newspaper. While data was collected for all three newspapers, only the *Punjabi Post* results are presented in this study because Brampton does not have a significant Russian or Korean-speaking population.

For the purposes of this study, constructed week sampling (Monday from the first week, Tuesday from the second week, Wednesday from the third week, etc.) was used for the two daily newspapers to ensure content from different days was examined and that no major news event was overrepresented. Although research on content analysis suggests that two constructed weeks are adequate to produce reliable data that is representative of a full year (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 1993), this study examined three weeks worth of content from each publication. A total of 21 issues of the *Post* and 21 issues of the *Korea Times Daily* were examined between January 4 and August 8, 2011. Twenty-one issues of the weekly *Russian Express* were also coded between January 14 and September 9, 2011.

Coders collected a range of content data, but for this study, three variables in particular were of interest. The first variable was one that offered insight into the geographic focus of coverage. To get a sense of the news geography that mattered to editors, all stories and photographs were classified according to whether they focused primarily upon the readers' country of origin (India, in the case of the *Punjabi Post*), Canadian federal/provincial news, international news, or local news about the Greater Toronto Area.

The second variable of interest was the specific topic of local news items. This data on story topic was used to identify the general categories pertaining to city hall/municipal affairs (*Table 2*).

Table 2: **Topic Categories for Local Articles and Photographs**

Topic Descriptions
Police/crime/legal/courts/local public safety
Education
Health/health protection/medical
Transit/gridlock/sprawl/traffic
Social supports/affordable housing/poverty/social justice
Land use/urban design/development/redevelopment
Municipal politics/services/budget
Environment/weather
Fire/accident
Religious-cultural diversity/multiculturalism/immigration
Arts/entertainment/local attractions
Business
Sports
Local impact of national security/terrorism/foreign policy/foreign disasters/human rights/Canadian soldiers/casualties
Federal or provincial politics/initiatives – local angle
Other/pets/travel/human interest

The final variable used in this study dealt with references to geographic locations in news items. In this case, coders examined each local news story and photograph and entered all references to places into the database, including addresses where sources were explicitly associated with a residence, business, or organization. ArcGIS—an information system that uses hardware and software to store, retrieve, map, and analyze geographic data—was then used to translate the spatial references into points on a news map for each local item. Geographic references for each item can then be combined to generate a dot density map showing all spatial references to locations that appeared in local news items (Lindgren & Wong, 2012). In this study, the geographic references variable was used to identify and map the extent to which the *Punjabi Post* published news items, including city hall-related news items that referenced Brampton locations.

Three coders worked on the content analysis—one coder fluent in Korean, a second coder fluent in Punjabi, and a third who is fluent in Russian. Since the coders worked in three different languages, intercoder reliability was addressed by training all coders for 35 hours using local stories and photographs published in the English-language *Toronto Star* newspaper. During the actual test, a total of 365 *Toronto Star* local news items were coded, which represented more than ten percent of the 1,382 local items coded for all three ethnic papers. Acceptable levels of

intercoder agreement were achieved, indicating that coding decisions for the individual ethnocultural newspapers was consistent and accurate.

Intercoder reliability for nominal variables was done using Cohen's kappa, a relatively conservative index that measures the extent to which coders make identical coding decisions and takes into account the agreement expected by chance. Research suggests that for multiple coders, intercoder reliability values of between .400 and .75 may be taken to represent fair to good agreement beyond chance (Banerjee, 1999; Fleiss, 1981; Landis & Koch, 1977). The average Cohen's kappa coefficient for all coder pairs was .784 for the news item topic variable and .736 for the geographic references. Agreement for the geographic focus of news items was not tested because the *Star* had sections labeled national, international, and local, making testing redundant. The ethnic newspapers also had labeled sections that mitigated the chance of errors in coding for this variable.

For the number of geographic references in news items, Lin's concordance, which measures the correlation between coder responses and takes into account systematic coding errors (coder bias), the possible range of responses, the magnitude of difference between coders' responses, and the agreement expected by chance, was used to measure intercoder reliability. The Lin's concordance coefficient for the number of geographic references in the test sample was .907.

Case Study: The City of Brampton and the Evolution of an Ethnic Media Strategy

Introduction

When Good (2009) did her 2004 fieldwork on the City of Brampton, she encountered a suburban municipality that was almost completely unresponsive to the needs of its increasingly diverse population. Back then, two councillors interviewed by Good were calling upon the city to do more for immigrants and ethnocultural groups. One was pressing for city advertising in ethnic newspapers, while the other wanted more diversity in hiring and communication practices—but not much else was happening. A race relations committee established in 1990 by a previous mayor was inactive, and delegations of Sikh residents pressing for the legalization of basement apartments so they could house extended families got nowhere. The only city-sponsored initiatives that recognized the city's changing demography were a monthly mayor's breakfast with local religious leaders and a multicultural festival called Caribram.

In 2004, Brampton was also still what Good (2009) considered a multiracial city with multiple visible minority groups, but no single group that accounted for more than 50 percent of the visible minority population. Consistent with what she observed in other multiracial municipalities, there were few signs of an anti-immigrant backlash. Change, however, was underway: The 2006 census confirmed Brampton's status as a biracial city according to Good's definition. Visible minority residents made up 57 percent of the population, but more significantly, more than half of visible minorities (57 percent) were of South Asian origin.

This led Good (2009) to speculate that the growing South Asian population and its spatial concentration would give rise to ethnically-based community organizations that would "have an easier time mobilizing for political action. This could influence the immigrant community's ability to pressure a municipality to respond to its concerns" (Good, 2009: 204). She also predicted that the municipality would become more responsive to the needs of its immigrant population as "feelings of cultural threat may increase among Canadian–born residents" (Ibid:

227) concerned about the influx of South Asians and their growing willingness to assert themselves. As the case study presented in this paper illustrates, she was indeed prescient.

Changes over Time

Brampton today is Canada's ninth largest city and among the fastest growing municipalities in the country—its population in 2011 was 523,911, up by 20.8 percent from the time of the previous census in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Although the reliability of Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey has been questioned because responses that year were voluntary instead of mandatory (Grant, 2015, March 11), the latest data suggest Brampton now falls solidly within Good's (2009) classification of a biracial community. South Asians account for 38 percent of the total population, and are by far the largest of the visible minority groups that make up 66.4 percent of all residents (The Corporation of the City of Brampton, 2015).

Growth in the number of South Asian inhabitants was reflected to some extent in early changes to the city's media strategy. In 2007, the communications department expanded the distribution of English-language news releases to include ethnic media (The Corporation of the City of Brampton, 2015). Today, about 50 ethnic news outlets, including about 40 that serve South Asians, are on that distribution list (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015). Back in 2007, however, when the list was first expanded, there was confusion in some quarters. Mariann Gordon, Brampton's acting director of strategic communications, said lack of familiarity with the process meant some newspapers simply published the whole release as is, including the city logo and contact information for communications staff. In other cases, newspapers billed the city for what the publishers thought was a paid advertisement. Gordon said city officials now explain the purpose of press releases when media outlets are added to the distribution list: "Once we explained, 'No, you know, this is what we're doing, it's your choice whether you use it . . .' over time the invoices stopped", she said (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015).

In another nod to Brampton's changing demography, city council in 2009 approved spending on a Celebrating Cultural Diversity advertising program in newspapers that served local residents of South Asian origin. Under the program, English-language advertisements containing congratulatory messages from the city were purchased to mark significant religious and cultural celebrations. As the number of South Asian media outlets proliferated and the list of celebrations expanded, the budget grew from the initial allocation of $15,000 to a total of $57,000 for 136 advertisements in 2014 (The Corporation of the City of Brampton, 2015). In 2009, city departments also began purchasing advertising space to disseminate information (usually in English) related to snow clearing, by-laws, upcoming events, and other specific issues.

Complications related to advertising quickly became apparent because rates varied substantially by publication and publishers were open to negotiating prices downward whenever the issue of cost was discussed. Many newspaper owners also unapologetically linked the amount of advertising purchased to the amount of city-related news coverage that appeared in their publications. Publishers frequently complained they were not getting their fair share of advertising dollars. And since few ethnic newspapers have audited circulation numbers, it was difficult for the city to gauge its return on investment (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015).

To address these problems and in a bid to ensure it received value for its advertising dollars, the city set a standard rate for advertisements that it pays to all publications. It also established a roster of pre-approved newspapers that qualify for the placement of city advertisements. To get on the roster, an applicant must fill out a questionnaire that asks for information about the publication's ownership and circulation, whether it is a member of any ethnic media organization, how and where (postal code information) the paper is distributed, and the proportion of local, provincial, national, and international news coverage that appears on its pages. Applicants must also agree to send a copy of every issue to the city. Once the publication is approved, its name is added to the roster and it becomes part of the rotation (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015).

Gordon said this process solved many of the problems: "Everyone who's participating knows the drill" (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015). She elaborated further:

> Fill out the questionnaire. Send us the paper. You'll get ads from us on a rotational basis. We had someone who was convinced that their competition was getting more ads from us than they were and that kind of stuff, so we produced the amount that we'd spent and could show (that), 'No, actually, as you can see, it's been very equitable.
>
>   (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015)

The next major milestone in Brampton's evolving ethnic media strategy was the 2013 decision to hire a specialty media coordinator. The ability to speak and read Punjabi was a requirement for the job, which entails responding to media inquiries, placing advertisements, and media monitoring (The Corporation of the City of Brampton, 2015). By 2014, the cost of the city's ethnic media plan was $151,000, an amount that covered both the media coordinator's salary and the Celebrating Cultural Diversity advertising program (the cost of departmental information advertisements is the responsibility of individual city departments).

It was in 2015, however, that Brampton pulled out ahead of other municipalities in terms of outreach to ethnic media. During the city's annual budget process councillors approved a $408,937 increase in spending on the city's ethnic media strategy. The additional money was to be used to hire a second specialty media coordinator ($94,000), engage an external firm to monitor and, where required, translate ethic media coverage of city-related issues ($50,000), and expand the existing Cultural Diversity Advertising program to include advertising in media serving the 10 largest ethnic groups in Brampton ($40,000), as exhibited in *Table 1*. It also provided $225,000 for the translation of two major corporate publications (such as the city's annual report) and all media releases from English into French and the top 10 other languages spoken in the city (The Corporation of the City of Brampton, 2015).

This plan was scaled back, however, at a subsequent council meeting where councillors expressed concerns about cost and whether translating media releases into 11 languages was justified (Criscione, 2015, July 14). In the end, they agreed to fund the translation of all media releases and summaries of two corporate communications publications into French as well as Punjabi, Urdu, and Portuguese—the three most commonly spoken languages after English—for a trial period in effect until the end of 2015. The Celebrating Cultural Diversity program was cancelled and replaced with a corporate advertising program that makes budget and other information that is relevant to the whole city available in the same four languages. While a

second ethnic media coordinator was not hired, funding for the existing position remained in place. The additional $50,000 for media monitoring services did receive final council approval (Criscione, 2015, July 14).
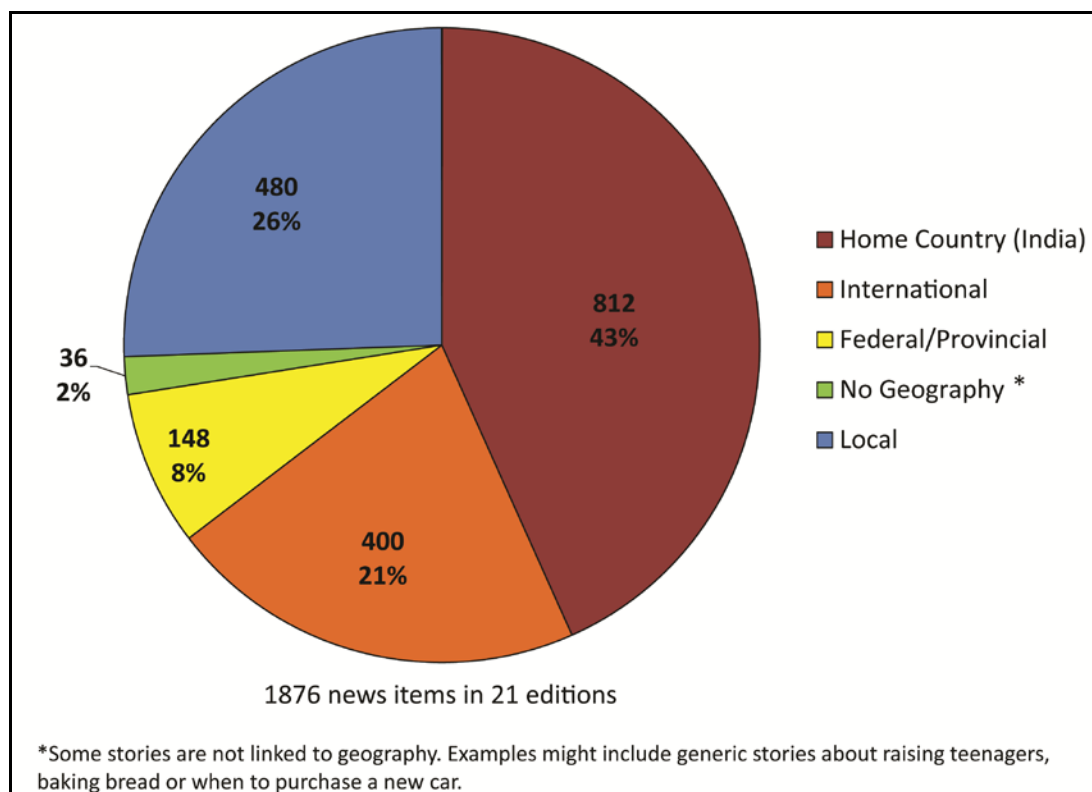
Getting the Message Out: City-Hall Related News in the Canadian Punjabi Post

By 2011, Brampton had taken some steps toward being more inclusive in terms of its communications strategy, most notably by distributing its English-language news releases to ethnic media. Was the city effectively getting its message out? One of the newspapers on the press-release distribution list was the *Canadian Punjabi Post* and as the following content analysis illustrates, the results were less than encouraging.

Breakdown of Coverage by Geographic Focus

The *Punjabi Post* published 1,876 news items about all topics in the 21-issue sample examined in this study. A total of 480 stories and photographs or 26 percent of all the content dealt with local people, events, and issues in the Greater Toronto Area. By comparison, 43 percent (812 news items) dealt with home country news about India and 21 percent dealt with international stories in countries other than India (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1: **Breakdown of *Punjabi Post* News Coverage by Geographic Origin**

480
26%

36
2%

148
8%

400
21%

812
43%

■ Home Country (India)
■ International
□ Federal/Provincial
■ No Geography *
■ Local

1876 news items in 21 editions

*Some stories are not linked to geography. Examples might include generic stories about raising teenagers, baking bread or when to purchase a new car.

Brampton-Related Content in the Punjabi Post

Mapping of the geographic references in the *Post* (*Figure 2*) shows that Brampton was an important part of the newspaper's coverage area: of the 480 news items that referenced locations in the Greater Toronto Area, 156 (71 stories and 85 photos) mentioned locations in Brampton.

*Figure 2:* **Geographic References in *Punjabi Post* Local News Items**
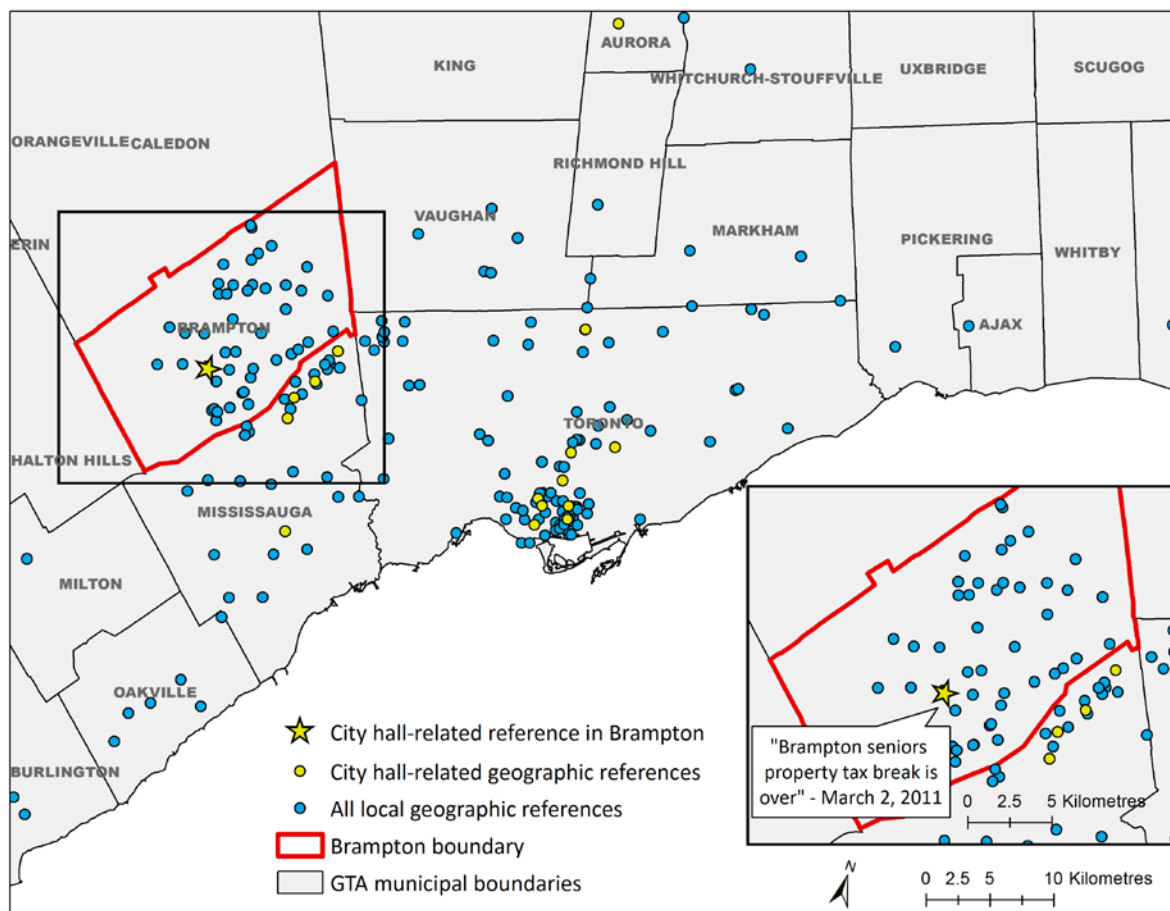
An examination of the topics covered by the newspaper, however, reveals Brampton city hall and municipal affairs overall were not priorities (*Figure 3*). Stories and photographs dealing with religious/cultural diversity, multiculturalism, and immigration issues were the most frequent topic of news coverage, accounting for 40 news items or about 25 percent of all the paper's Brampton-related content. Of those 40 items, 16 dealt with cultural festivals and celebrations, eight dealt with local political activism related to diversity issues, five celebrated individual achievement, and none dealt with city hall-related matters.

The second most frequently covered category of Brampton news fell under the social supports/affordable housing/poverty and related issues category, including policies regarding people with disabilities—all matters that could potentially involve city hall. This was not, however, the case: all 35 news items (one story and 34 related photographs) focused on a charity wheelchair race organized by Canadian South Asians Supporting Independent Living (C-SASIL's first successful wheel chair race, 2011, June 13). The sports category was the third most

frequently covered topic, but it also contained no news items dealing with municipal matters: coverage of local kabbadi (a contact sport popular in India) tournaments accounted for 31 (six stories and 25 photographs) of the 34 news items.

Figure 3: *Punjabi Post* Coverage of Brampton: Breakdown by Topic
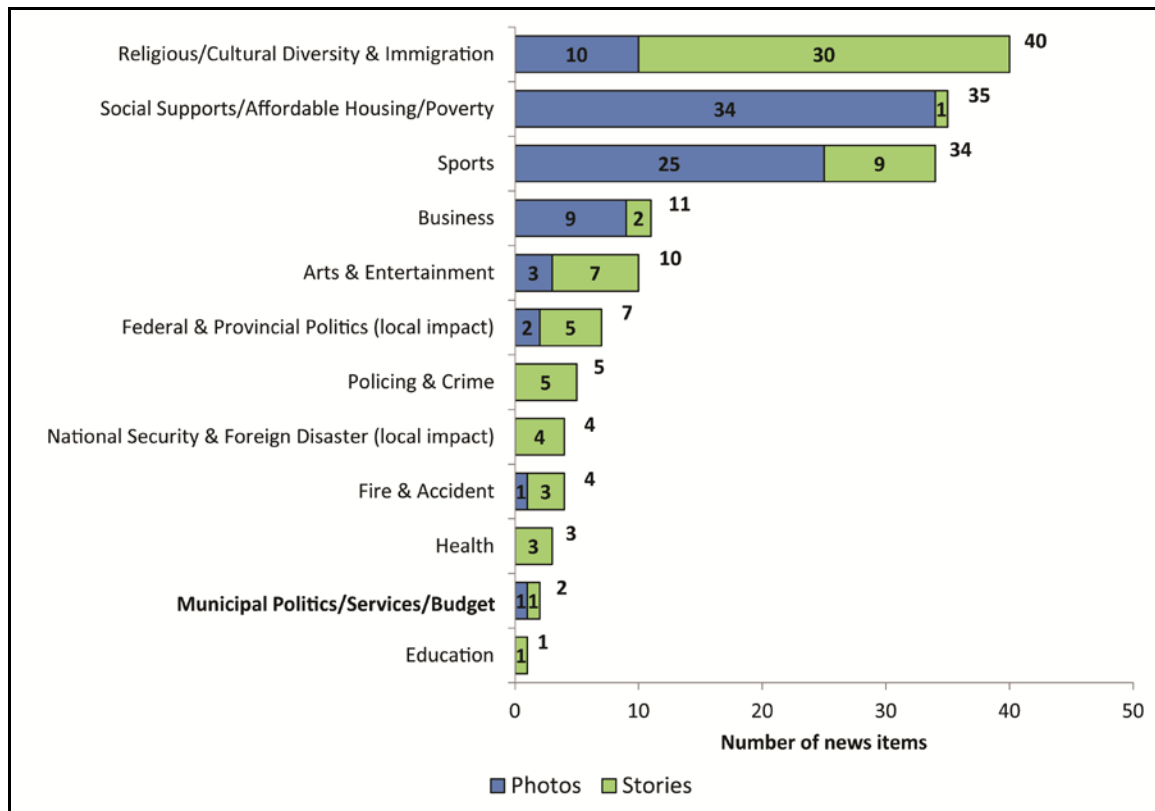
Of the remaining list of categories (see *Table 2*), only three clearly pertained to municipal matters:

- the transit/gridlock/sprawl/traffic category for stories dealing with topics ranging from new transit funding to cycling issues
- the land-use/urban design/development/redevelopment category for topics ranging from new condo developments to heritage building issues
- the municipal politics/services/budget category for stories dealing with topics such as garbage management and city park issues

The *Punjabi Post*, however, did not publish any stories about transit or land use and it published only one story and one accompanying photo in the municipal politics/services/budget category under the headline "Brampton seniors property tax break is over" (Brampton seniors property tax break is over, 2011, March 1). Indeed, of all the *Post*'s Greater Toronto Area coverage, only 19 news items (a scant four percent of all 480 local stories and photographs) actually dealt with transit, land-use, or municipal politics/services/budgets. As the news map (*Figure 2*) shows, 17 of those 19 news items were about municipal issues in cities other than Brampton. A January 12,

2011, article entitled "TTC cancels fare hike" (2011, January 12), for instance, reported on transit fares in the neighbouring City of Toronto, while on August 8, 2011, the article entitled "Simar Kaur is ahead in Mississauga's Ward 5 election", dealt with by-election news in Mississauga.

Discussion

Brampton municipal stories were not making it into the *Punjabi Post* in 2011, even though the newspaper was receiving the municipality's media releases (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015) and the city is home to a potential audience of more than 91,000 Punjabi-speaking residents (see *Table 1*). One likely explanation is that the city's press releases were in English and turning these releases into stories relevant to the *Post*'s audience would be time consuming and therefore costly. After a press release arrives in the newsroom of a small ethnic news operation via email, a journalist's Twitter feed or by fax, the sections to be used in a story would first have to be translated. Ideally, a reporter would also seek comment from relevant sources, arrange a photograph, and eventually write a story. All this takes time and time was not something the *Post*'s journalists had to spare in 2011 when just six reporters and editors were turning out a newspaper six days a week (Lindgren, 2013). Meeting this sort of daily production deadline would be gruelling for such a small team and leave little time for any actual hands-on news reporting. This reality is also reflected in the *Post's* overall coverage. While just 26 percent of all content (480 news items) dealt with local news and events in the Greater Toronto Area, 43 percent (812 news items) of its coverage focused on home country news about India—news that is easy to come by and cheap to obtain in the Internet age (*Figure 1*).

 The extensive use of photographs in the *Post*'s coverage of kabbadi tournaments (25 photos and nine stories) and the charity wheelchair race (34 photos, one story) is worth noting in that it also likely reflects the limited resources a small newspaper has to devote to local coverage. A reporter who attends these sorts of events, for instance, can easily come away with dozens of photos. Alternatively, an eager community member might also write up an account of an event and supply numerous photos. In other words, stories and photos about local sports and community events are substantially easier and less costly to come by than more complicated municipal stories about, for instance, transit, land use, and city politics/budgets.

 Apart from financial constraints, the news judgment exercised by reporters and editors at the *Post* also likely played a role in the newspaper's decision to, for the most part, ignore city hall/municipal stories. The emphasis in the paper's coverage on multiculturalism/immigration issues, including festivals and celebrations, the charity wheelchair race, and culturally specific sports (e.g., kabbadi) points to a news agenda that is substantially different from that of mainstream media. Viewed through Fleras' framework of ethnic media as "instruments of cultural preservation as well as agents of societal incorporation" (2009: 727), the *Post*'s content suggests its editorial emphasis was more about reinforcing cultural identity and strengthening bonds among its Punjabi-speaking readers than building bridges beyond its immediate community.

 The economic and practical challenges facing ethnic media and the City of Brampton's obvious failure to get its message out through a publication like the *Punjabi Post* suggests Brampton needed to make it cheaper and easier for news media that work in languages other than English to cover municipal news. The city did just that in 2013 when it hired an ethnic media

coordinator who could deal with journalists in Punjabi and Hindi. It went a step further in 2015 when council approved an expanded ethnic media plan that provided for the translation of media releases from English into Punjabi, Urdu, Portuguese, and French, revamped the city's advertising policy, and funded a service to monitor municipal reporting by ethnic media. An informal survey of 10 municipalities conducted by city officials revealed that the new policy, even in its scaled-back version, put Brampton at the forefront of municipal efforts to reach residents through ethnic media (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015). Compared to a decade ago, when Brampton was deemed unresponsive to its increasingly diverse population (Good, 2009) and had no ethnic media policy to speak of, the situation in 2015 represents a significant shift.

Good's (2009) determinants of municipal responsiveness to diversity shed light on the reasons for this shift. In the first instance, she theorized that biracial (by her definition) municipalities tend to be more responsive to the needs of newcomers and indeed, Brampton's emergence as a biracial city has already been discussed. Secondly, as Good suggested, changes in a city's demographic profile can give rise to a backlash among long-term residents. In Brampton's case, uneasiness about a rapidly expanding South Asian population dominated by Punjabi speakers (*Table 1*) surfaced in a variety of ways. Anti-immigration flyers turned up in the mailboxes of local residents on two occasions in 2014 (Warren, 2014, August 7). The Punjabi community's preference for bringing together extended families in large homes has also led to clashes with other residents concerned about overcrowding and the construction of large houses in established neighbourhoods. In one protracted dispute, the construction of what neighbours considered a monster home in an area with smaller houses led to complaints of harassment by the immigrant homeowner (Bascaramurty, 2013, September 13). In another case, homeowners in a mostly Punjabi neighbourhood vehemently opposed a townhouse development consisting of homes they insisted were too small to accommodate extended families (Grewal, 2013, March 15). In that instance, politicians poised to vote in favour of the development at a Brampton city council meeting were forced to vacate the council chamber while security officials stepped in to quiet the mostly Punjabi-speaking crowd (Grewal, 2013, April 18). Local tensions were subsequently highlighted in a *Toronto Star* story headlined "Brampton suffers identity crisis as newcomers swell city's population: 'White flight' is a phrase few dare to speak aloud, but statistics suggest a growing unease with a city that's changing too fast" (Grewal, 2013, May 24). The piece quoted both long-time residents and newcomers expressing concern about religious and cultural differences and the concentration of South Asian residents in suburban enclaves. Both groups called urgently for dialogue.

Consistent with Good's (2009) findings, the emergence of these conflicts prompted city council to adopt a more proactive ethnic media strategy as one way to ease tensions. The changes in the city's responsiveness to newcomers can also be traced to the emergence of a new municipal leadership strongly committed to reaching out to Brampton's diverse communities: in a major shakeup of city council, voters elected six new councillors (out of 10) and a new mayor during the fall 2014 municipal elections. Linda Jeffrey, Brampton's new chief magistrate, had long been calling for the city to reach out to newcomers. She was a member of Ontario's provincial legislature and a former Brampton city councillor in 2004 when she raised concerns about the lack of city advertising in Punjabi-language media during an interview with Good. At the time, she was also critical of her council colleagues' insistence that settlement and other services for immigrants were a federal rather than a municipal responsibility.

In her 2014 mayoral campaign, Jeffrey ran on a platform that promised residents greater access to city hall and, once she was elected, she championed the expansion of ethnic media services (Criscione, 2015, July 14). Her hand was strengthened when an interim auditor appointed by the new council to review Brampton's finances highlighted the need to effectively communicate both the good and not-so-good news to taxpayers regarding the state of the municipality's books. In a city where more than a third of residents speak a language other than English at home, "the obvious challenge is that just getting your message out in English will likely not be sufficient", Jim McCarter advised in his final report to council. Brampton, he went on to observe, "has the chance to explore innovative ways of communicating that reflect the ethnic diversity of its residents" (Brampton City Council, 2015: 23).

Jeffrey's priorities were reflected in subsequent city staff reports. During workshops and priority-setting sessions attended by the new council, "ethnic media communications emerged as a key strategic initiative" and council members also expressed "a strong desire to better engage with the community and communicate with everyone in a way that is clear, compelling and constructive," as one such document noted (Brampton. Corporate Services Committee, 2015: 2). The city's June 24, 2015 discussion paper that originally proposed the $408,937 expansion of the ethnic media plan argued that "taking a more inclusive and direct approach to sharing important news and information with everyone in Brampton—one that will see that information distributed in eleven additional languages—will help people feel connected to their city and the people who govern it" (Ibid: 7). The discussion paper went on to say that translating media releases into more languages will help ensure the city's messages are delivered accurately and provide a "wider network of outlets through which residents can learn about opportunities to provide input and be consulted" (Ibid: 8).

When councillors who were concerned about costs and the efficacy of translating media releases into 11 languages voted to scale back the program, Jeffrey argued fiercely against the move: "I believe this is well worth the money spent to make sure everybody in our community has access to what's going on at city hall", she insisted (Criscione, 2015, July 14). That said, it is worth noting that even translating all media releases into just four languages involves challenges that go beyond cost and still need to be worked through. One problem is that it takes three to five days to translate and proofread a document. While city officials say the lag time is not an issue when a release is planned in advance, difficulties arise when information needs to be disseminated at the last minute (The Corporation of the City of Brampton, 2015). As Mariann Gordon acknowledged: "There's going to be a lag of several days before we're going to get the same information out in the other languages" (personal communication, March 20, 2015).

Brampton's previous experience with the translation of other municipal documents also revealed potential issues with the formal standards used by professional translation services. The nearest word equivalent for "community" in Punjabi, for instance, is "brotherhood". Consequently, on one of the infrequent occasions when the city did commission the translation of a departmental advertisement related to municipal bylaws, an advertisement urging residents not to litter and to keep the community clean came back saying the Punjabi-equivalent of "keep the brotherhood clean" (Mariann Gordon, personal communication, March 20, 2015). While the city's current ethnic media coordinator catches and fixes awkward phrasing in the case of Punjabi and Hindi translations, council's decision not to hire a second specialty media coordinator means that, for the time being at least, no such safeguard is available for translations into the other mandated languages.

Finally, there is no guarantee that translating city media releases into Punjabi, Urdu, Portuguese, and French will result in more Brampton municipal coverage by news organizations that report news in those languages. Ethnic news outlets are not in the business of duplicating the coverage of their mainstream counterparts because, as the *Punjabi Post* content analysis indicated, their raison d'être is to focus on news of particular interest to their readers, listeners, and viewers and to tell stories their audience members are unable to find elsewhere.

Having said that, the staffing and financial constraints that plague many small news organizations suggest that a ready supply of translated local news may be to some degree irresistible and that more city hall related news will indeed appear in ethnic newspapers, online websites, and broadcasts. The availability of translated media releases may also, over time, influence the news judgment exercised by journalists because the releases will make it easier to tell municipal stories in a way that is relevant and tailored to audience needs. A press release that outlines a new city bylaw restricting parking hours on main streets, for instance, may not at first glance be obvious fare for a Punjabi-language newspaper focused on news specific to its community. With the translated release in hand, however, a reporter from the newspaper could more easily turn it into a story relevant to the paper's readers. This could be done by covering the reactions of both Punjabi-speaking business owners along those thoroughfares and Punjabi-speaking homeowners who might be worried that nearby residential streets will be turned into parking lots.

Conclusion

This study illustrates that reaching out to ethnocultural communities via their ethnic media requires more than just sending out press releases: The *Punjabi Post* received Brampton's releases, but devoted almost no coverage to municipal affairs. The city's recent decision to translate media releases into the most commonly spoken non-official languages has the potential to increase the number of city-hall related stories, if only because it makes it easier for small news operations to report on such issues. The pick-up on municipal stories by news organizations that work in Punjabi, Urdu, and Portuguese is therefore a subject worth revisiting.

If the new policy survives beyond its fall 2015 pilot phase, research that analyzes its results will be highly instructive for other municipalities considering similar policies. It would be worthwhile in the future to investigate how journalists who work for the Punjabi, Urdu, and Portuguese language media perceive of and react to the city policy. Do the translated releases make them more likely to incorporate municipal news into their coverage? From an audience perspective, interviews with city councillors about whether constituents seem more informed about municipal affairs, and with community members about whether they have more access to city hall news, would also be useful ways to gauge the impact of Brampton's expanded ethnocultural media strategy. Finally, follow-up interviews with officials in the city's communications branch would an opportunity to identify lessons learned and best practices. If the city makes available the results of its ethnic media monitoring service, that too could be used to track the impact of the new policy over time.

In the meantime, Brampton's experience to date already offers guidance for other municipalities grappling with how to communicate municipal news and information to newcomers, particularly those who are not comfortable consuming news in English. The challenges related to translation, the placement of advertisements, and the relative lack of sophistication of some ethnic news outlets are not unique. Other cities can learn from

Brampton's handling of these problems or, at the very least, benefit from a better understanding of what they may face if they adopt similar policies.

In Brampton's case, the dissemination of translated press releases, combined with translated advertisements designed to alert citizens about municipal bylaws, budget matters, public meetings, and other events, are a form of proactive outreach that city officials hope will equip immigrants with the information they need to participate in civic life. Such initiatives have the potential to provide newcomers with cultural roadmaps that help them navigate the political and practical complexities of a new place. Viewed in practical terms, cities that do more to make municipal information available to immigrants via ethnocultural media are actually providing a settlement service in the guise of a communication policy. Municipalities that reach out in this way, however, are also sending an important symbolic message to newcomers and their media institutions—a message telling them they are a valued part of the wider community and that they belong.

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