

Emergence of the Tamil Community in the GTA



FACTS AND FIGURES



Canadian Tamils'
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THE CANADIAN TAMIL DATABASE

The Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce (CTCC) has launched an ambitious and important initiative that will bring the Tamil business community to the forefront. The aim is to draw the Canadian public and government's attention to the tremendous opportunities to work with the Tamil community.

This initiative involves building a comprehensive database. This database will consist of up-to-date, cost-efficient and accurate information and statistics about the Canadian Tamil community. It will be a tool with which to continuously measure the growth of the Tamil community. As such, this database will be an invaluable asset to entrepreneurs, community members, organizations, planners, policy makers, and all levels of government.

The database will be implemented over the next 2 years:

PHASE I

- Database Launch: March 8, 2006
- Release of the report "Emergence of the Tamil Community: Facts and Figures"
- Partnership with Statistics Canada to promote the Tamil community's participation in the Census 2006
- Completion: Spring 2006

PHASE II

- Dynamic Web-based directory of Tamil-owned businesses
- Tamil Community Map of the GTA including population concentration and services
- Completion: Fall 2006

PHASE III

- Comprehensive Database encompassing Census 2006 facts and figures as well as information on the Tamil Business Community based on surveys, focus groups and interviews
- Completion: Fall 2007

THE REPORT

This report is part of Phase I of The Database Project. It is the first in a series of steps CTCC plans to undertake to disseminate information about the Tamil Community. This report provides a snapshot of the Tamil Community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). It includes facts and figures about the community in the GTA, highlights the tremendous growth of the business community, and outlines potential opportunities for development and growth.

The report is based on a compilation of various sources of information including: Statistics Canada Census 1996 and 2001, research studies published on the Tamil community, and market surveys conducted for the specific purpose of this project. CTCC engaged Adventa Strategies Inc., a market research and consulting firm, to produce this report.

The facts and figures presented in this report are based on data that has been gathered to date. It is a work in progress. As such, this report may not represent a complete picture of the Tamil community in the GTA.

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Tamils of Sri Lankan origin ("Tamils") are one of the fastest growing visible minority groups in the Greater Toronto Area. Canada is now home to more than 250,000 Tamils, of which approximately 200,000 live in the GTA.

The history of Tamils in Canada goes back to the 1940s, when a few hundred Tamils migrated to Canada. The 1983 communal riots in Sri Lanka precipitated the mass exodus of Tamils, with over 500,000 finding refuge in countries such as Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, France and Switzerland.

The vast majority of Tamils immigrated to Canada in the last 20 years. Canada is now home to the largest Tamil population outside of Sri Lanka. Within this short period of time, Tamils have established a mounting presence in multiple aspects of Canadian life: business, academic, political and social. The Tamil business community has grown in leaps and bounds, with over 2,000 Tamil-owned businesses in the GTA.

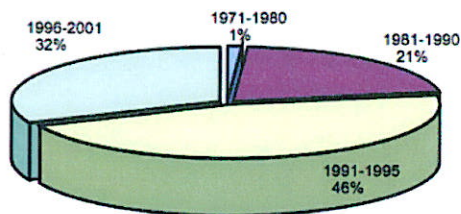
COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

In the last two decades, Sri Lanka has been one of the top ten source countries for immigrants to Canada. Sri Lanka accounted for 6.4% of all immigrants to Toronto from 1991 to 2001¹.

According to Statistics Canada, the South Asian population is expected to grow between 72% and 137% by 2017 from immigration and population growth. This would mean the Canadian Tamil population would reach between 450,000 and 550,000 by 2017.

IMMIGRATION

More than 68% of the Tamils have resided in Canada for more than 10 years.² Many of these residents are citizens (70%) compared to permanent residents (25%), refugee claimants (3%) and conventional refugees (2%)³.

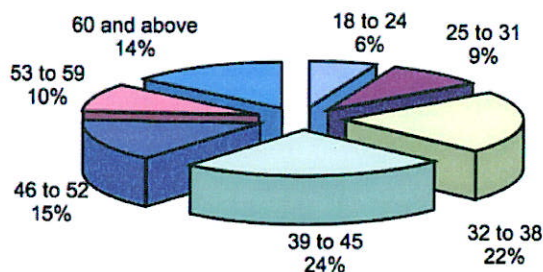


Immigration Pattern of Tamils to Canada

Source: Statistics Canada (2001)

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Tamils between the ages of 18 and 45 account for 61% of the adult Canadian Tamil population.

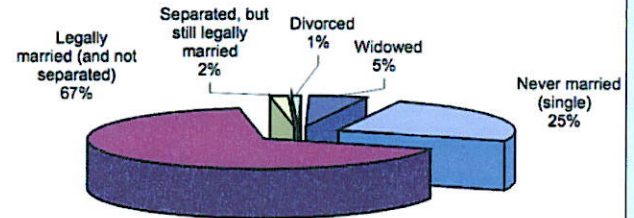


Age Distribution (of those older than 18 years of age)

Beiser et al. 2003

MARITAL STATUS

The Tamils' cultural emphasis on marriage and family life is reflected in the large percentage of Tamils in committed marital relationships (67%).

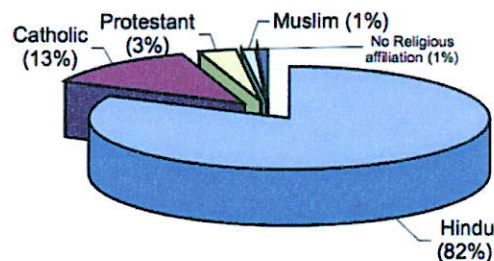


Marital Status (of the Tamils over the age of 15)

Source: Statistics Canada (2001)

RELIGION

Religion plays a significant role in the everyday life of Tamils. 82% reported Hinduism as their religious belief. In the absence of a Tamil community centre, Tamil-owned temples, churches, and other places of worship alternate as community centres. They provide a place for Tamils to gather and connect with each other. There are more than 40 Hindu temples and 18 Christian congregations.



Religious Affiliation of Canadian Tamils

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001

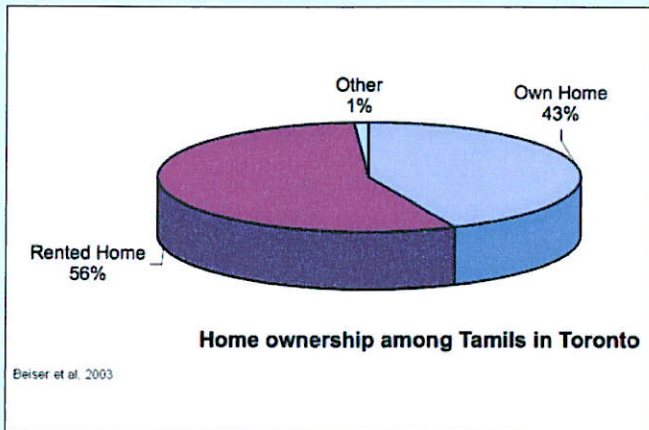
¹ Jack Jedwab (2005), North America's Largest Sri Lankan Communities in Canada: Toronto and Montreal, Continent's Major Centres, Association of Canadian Studies.

² Statistics Canada (2001). Census of Canada: Ethno Cultural Portrait of Canada. Ottawa, Ont. Statistics Canada.

³ Beiser et al (2003).

HOME OWNERSHIP

Acquiring a home creates a sense of community and contributes to overall growth and stability. Canadian Tamils are no different when seeking a house, with 43% owning their own home.

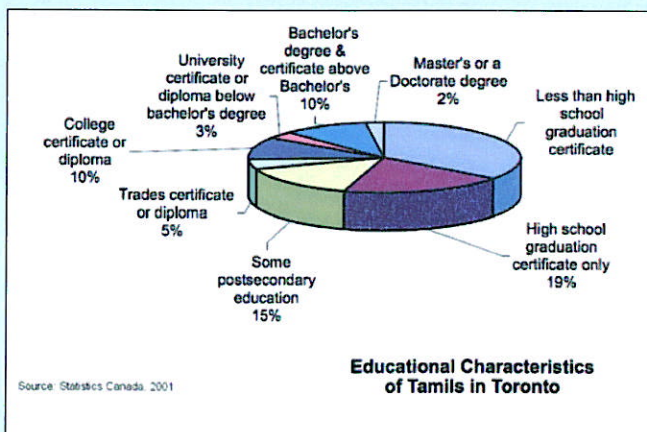


LANGUAGE

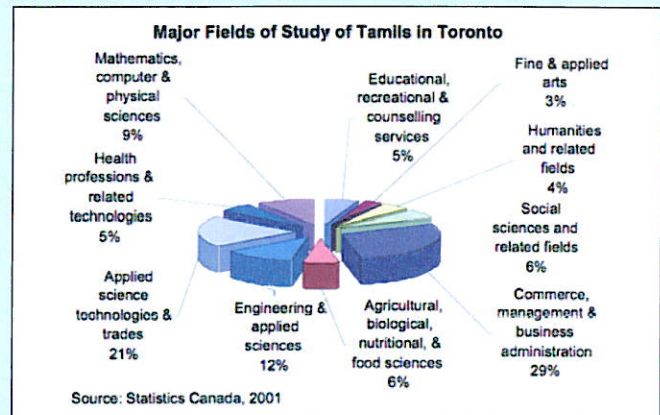
In adapting to a new environment, the Tamil community has acquired the ability to overcome linguistic barriers by successfully obtaining the necessary language skills. Nearly 94% of the population reported that they considered their spoken English to be fair to excellent⁴.

EDUCATION

Education has always been important to Tamils. More than 12% of Tamils in Toronto have a university degree. 15% have a college certificate, diploma or a trade certificate. Another 15% have some post-secondary education other than a degree or diploma.



The area of Finance and Business predominates career choices in the Tamil community. As shown below, 29% of Tamils in Toronto studied in the fields of Commerce, Management and Business Administration.



Youth in the community represent tremendous growth potential. This is apparent in the large number of Tamil students studying at various universities in Ontario. Currently there are more than 5,000 post-secondary Tamil students in Ontario.

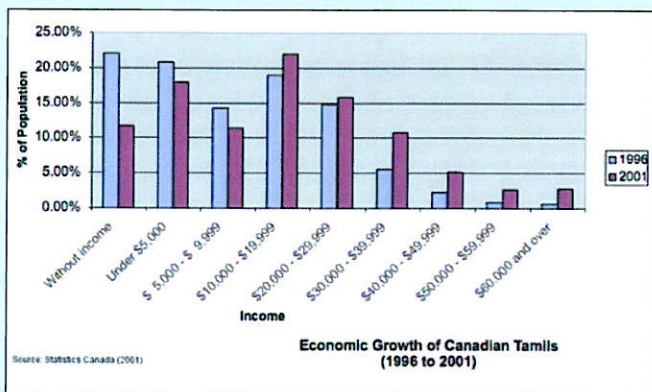
University	# of Tamil Students
Carleton University	350
McMaster University	275
University of Ontario	250
University of Ottawa	90
Queen's University	100
Ryerson University	400
University of Toronto	885
University of Waterloo	125
University of Windsor	150
York University	450
Others	200
Total – Universities (Ontario)	3,275

Colleges	# of Tamil Students
Seneca	380
Centennial	600
Humber	125
Sheridan	80
George Brown	150
Total – Colleges (GTA)	1,335

⁴ Morton Beiser, Laura Simich and Nalini Pandalangat (2003). Community in Distress: Mental Health Needs and Help-seeking in the Tamil Community in Toronto. International Migration, Vol. 41 (5), Pg 233- 245.

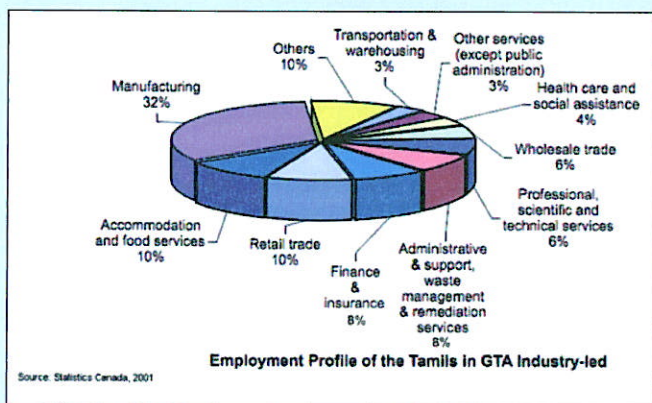
EMPLOYMENT

In 2001, the average annual employment income of Tamils aged over 15 and working full-time in the GTA was \$31,546. This is an increase of 81%⁵ as compared with \$17,450 in 1996. This increase is 16% greater than the average increase in income of the comparable Toronto population. This trend is a clear indication of the earning power of the Tamil community as it continues to establish itself in Toronto and Canada.



Consistent with the growth in the average income, there is also a shift in higher income earners. Overall unemployment among Tamils in Toronto decreased from 25.6% to 11.7%.

Approximately a third of the Tamils are employed in the manufacturing sector, a common trend among new immigrant communities.



Over the last 10 years, there has been a significant increase in Tamils employed in specialized fields. This is due in part to the large number of foreign-trained Tamil professionals who have succeeded in re-training and re-entering their respective fields in their adoptive country. These specialized fields include dentistry, medicine, engineering, professional accounting and law.

The Tamil community has also seen a growth in numbers of agents dealing with real estate, mortgage, financial planning and insurance. This is concurrent with the new wealth accumulation that many Tamils are now experiencing.

Tamil Professionals in the GTA*

Professional Accountants**	440
Doctors***	190
Dentists	38
Lawyers	26

Other Professionals

Real Estate Agents	250
Mortgage Agents	92
Financial Planners	75
Insurance Agents	70

* List includes fields that make membership information public.

** CGAs, CMAs, & CAs

*** Tamil-speaking doctors listed with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)

MEDIA

The community has established numerous mediums by which important local, national and international news can be relayed.

NEWSPAPERS - There are 30 weekly and bi-weekly community newspapers in circulation.

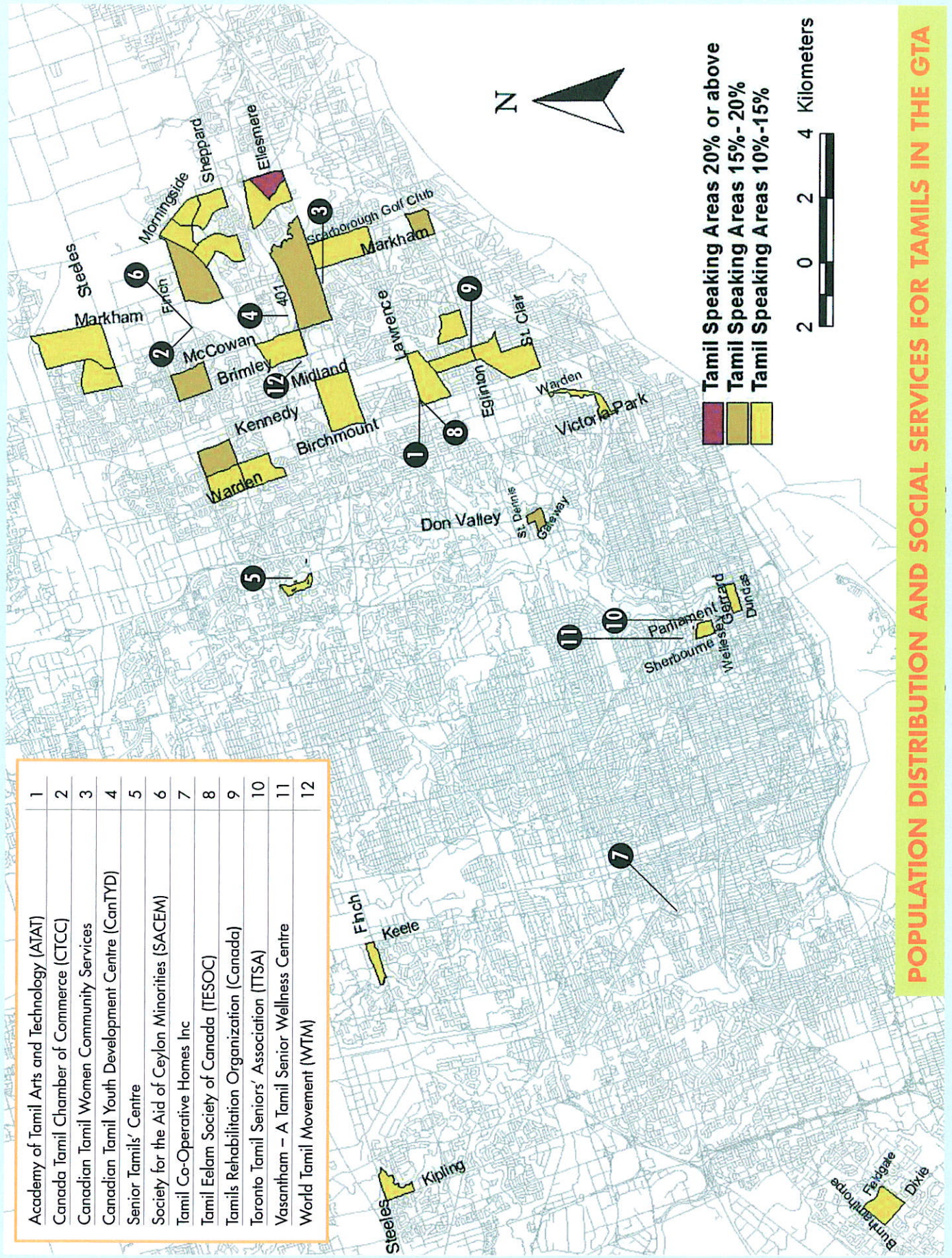
RADIO - There are 4 specialty radio channels, 2 FM radio programs and 1 FM radio station. CMR FM 101.3 is the first South Asian-owned FM station in Canada.

TELEVISION - There are 2 twenty-four hour Tamil television channels and a weekly program on a mainstream network.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Throughout Toronto, there are 27 community-based social service and advocacy groups which currently serve the Tamil community. In addition, there are also more than 45 organizations that provide social and community support and primarily employ Tamil-speaking workers. The homeland-based Village Councils and Alumni Associations glue the community together. They serve various purposes including recreation, networking, volunteering and social support.

- 1 Academy of Tamil Arts and Technology (ATAT)
- 2 Canada Tamil Chamber of Commerce (CTCC)
- 3 Canadian Tamil Women Community Services
- 4 Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CanTYD)
- 5 Senior Tamils' Centre
- 6 Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities (SACEM)
- 7 Tamil Co-Operative Homes Inc
- 8 Tamil Eelam Society of Canada (TESOC)
- 9 Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (Canada)
- 10 Toronto Tamil Seniors' Association (TISA)
- 11 Vasantham – A Tamil Senior Wellness Centre
- 12 World Tamil Movement (WTM)



TAMIL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The Tamil community's entrepreneurial spirit has thrived in Canada. It has helped create thousands of jobs and opportunities for all Canadians.

The 1996 census reported that there were 380 incorporated and non-incorporated, self-employed individuals in the Tamil community. The 2001 Census reported that there were 650 businesses. However, since 2001, as a result of positive economic conditions in Canada and the community's growing establishment, there has been a significant increase in businesses owned and operated by Canadian Tamils. Today, the number of Tamil-owned businesses in the GTA stands at more than 2,000.

Tamil businesses can be categorized into three major groups:

- **Businesses that serve the unique needs of the Tamil community alone:** Examples include caterers, jewellers, groceries and educational services. These businesses are gradually targeting other communities as entrepreneurs gain confidence in targeting non-Tamil customers.
- **Multi-Ethnic Businesses (businesses that serve the Tamil community and other ethnic groups):** Examples include real estate, finance, professional and retail. There are a significant number of national brand name franchises in the real estate, mortgage and insurance sectors. In real estate, for example, there are a nine brokerages catering to all communities. Of the nine, 6 are part of national franchises.
- **Non-ethno Specific Businesses (mainstream businesses):** Examples are manufacturing, technology, transport and restaurant. The greatest opportunity and challenges are in businesses that cater almost exclusively to non-Tamil customers. These are primarily supported by national franchises or by practical hands-on experience working in a particular area of business for years on end.

There are two major sectors in the Non-ethno Specific Business category that are worth highlighting:

Transportation: The transportation sector in general, and the trucking industry in particular, has had exponential growth since the community's entrance into the sector. Although accurate numbers are difficult to ascertain, there are at least 12 major trucking firms in GTA and several independent, owner-operated truckers.

Franchise Ownership: Although the Tamil community's contribution to the culinary delights of Canadians is nothing new, there is an increasing trend towards restaurant and franchise ownership in the sector. Generally, most of the major restaurant franchises such as the Firkin Group, Fox and the Fiddle, Applejack's, Golden Griddle, and Shoeless Joe's have a good representation of Tamil owners and part-owners. Similarly, there is an increasing trend towards non-franchised restaurants and bars. In the downtown core, there is a trend towards joint ownership of fine dining establishments, comprising of Tamil and non-Tamil entrepreneurs.

TAMIL - OWNED BUSINESSES IN THE GTA

INDUSTRY	# OF BIZ
Utilities	94
Construction	16
Manufacturing	17
Wholesale Trade	10
Retail Trade	393
Transportation and Warehousing	54
Information and Cultural Industries	76
Finance and Insurance	409
Real Estate and rental and leasing	252
Professional, scientific and technical services	64
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	33
Educational services	102
Health care and social assistance	230
Arts, entertainment and recreation	210
Accommodation and food services	107

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Numerous opportunities exist for the Tamil community and the mainstream to develop relationships that can mutually benefit and enrich both sides.

- **Employment:** Communicate to mainstream businesses and employers about the invaluable experience, expertise, skills, dependability and commitment of Canadian Tamils.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Showcase the entrepreneurial heart of Canadian Tamils and their ability to work with various communities through business conventions and tradeshows.
- **Investment:** Educate mainstream businesses (internal, external investors and venture capitalists) about the significant market potential available in doing business with the Tamil community.
- **Property Development:** Develop Tamil commercial and retail centres.
- **Branding:** Promote the 'Tamil' brand of pleasant and delicious culinary delights. Examples could include branded foods, eateries and restaurants.
- **Business Expansion:** Educate the Tamil business community on the advantages of conducting business to a wider local, national and international audience.
- **Media:** Invest further in the development and promotion of media houses. Media could be used to publicize the dollar potential and marketability of the Canadian Tamil community.
- **Home Ownership:** Encourage greater home ownership and real estate investing among Tamils of all ages. Educate and provide information about viable financial opportunities to Tamils.
- **Politics:** Encourage Canadian Tamils to participate in the governance and civic process. Increased political presence will advance the community's issues and concerns, encouraging more equitable allocation of resources.

- **Youth:** Encourage Tamil youth to take on more leadership roles in the community and to expand their horizons when considering career choices.
- **Seniors:** An aging population offers great business opportunities. As Tamil seniors age their requirements will be greater, increasing demands on healthcare, living and mobility services.
- **Language:** Promote the importance of language training and the opportunity it provides, especially when it comes to employment.
- **Community Centre:** Advocate for the construction of a unique and inclusive community centre.

CONCLUSION

The Tamil community has grown very rapidly in a short space of time. Many Tamils came to Canada because of political strife in Sri Lanka. Through inspiration and sheer ingenuity, Tamils have excelled in the areas of education, business and employment. Members of the Tamil community are contributing immensely to the very fabric that makes up Canada's multicultural society.

This report has provided the demographics of the Tamil community as they currently exist. Also, the report has identified trends in the areas of immigration, home ownership, education, employment, media, social supports and business.

All the trends point to one overriding message: the Tamil community is poised to expand even further in numbers, strength and sophistication in the next decade. The time to capitalize on these opportunities is now. CTCC and other key community stakeholders look forward to working with interested parties in the community, mainstream and government to make this happen.

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