

# HIGHLIGHTS

## YORK REGION IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT STRATEGY



The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy's long-term vision is to support the overall well-being of both newcomers and long-term residents of York Region. The Strategy was developed in collaboration with the Community Partnership Council to increase coordination of settlement services, improve labour market outcomes and build York Region's capacity to be welcoming and inclusive to the newcomers, who will make York Region their home.

Consultation played a significant role in understanding what is, and will be, required to build York Region's capacity. Almost 2,000 stakeholders participated in community consultations across York Region between May and December 2010. Participants included newcomers, long-term residents, community leaders, and representatives of organizations, agencies and groups, local municipalities, employer networks and planning tables. The consultation findings formed the basis for many of the directions in the Strategy.

The Strategy includes a series of community results that set out a long-term vision for York Region where newcomers are able to live, find employment and prosper. To create this future York Region, the Strategy also highlights short-term priorities for action. These priorities will inform program and service planning, organizational development and resource allocation to enhance the integration of newcomers.

The landscape and social fabric of York Region are changing. By 2031, 55 per cent of York Region's population will be immigrants. This demographic shift has important implications for future planning of infrastructure, designing programs and services, developing a strong economy and fostering a welcoming and inclusive community. All community stakeholders, long term residents and newcomers have a role to play in creating a community where all residents can succeed.



# Long-Term Vision For York Region

**York Region is a community that is welcoming and inclusive** – a community that openly receives newcomers, promotes social equity and is cohesive. It is a community that understands the needs of newcomers and facilitates their full participation in all aspects of community life, the economy and Canadian society.

## Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Support the continued development of the community hub model (i.e. Welcome Centres) and the York Region Immigration Portal
- Build community capacity to be welcoming, inclusive and equitable by providing adequate resources, fostering partnerships and promoting community awareness and acceptance
- Continue and improve collaboration and knowledge sharing across sectors and different levels of governments
- Improve accessibility and awareness of programs and supports to address issues of social isolation and labour market access
- Address issues related to language barriers and the impact on all areas of integration

**Newcomers are economically integrated** – newcomers strive and are succeeding in the labour market, have jobs that match their skills and education, are living in affordable, stable and safe housing and have a liveable household income. Newcomers help meet labour market shortages and keep York Region economically competitive.

## Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Work with employers to hire newcomers
- Facilitate newcomers' understanding and learning of the "Canadian work culture"
- Support successful "first job in Canada" experiences
- Support newcomer entrepreneurs
- Offer better support for the accreditation process
- Improve quantity and quality of affordable, safe and stable housing

**Newcomers are socially integrated** – newcomers connect with the community and feel included, valued and positively linked to the people, places and things within and outside their communities. Newcomers feel safe and are living healthy lives.

## Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Meet the individual needs of newcomers and provide a continuum of supports.
- Help newcomers to be connected and live in safe communities.



- Address mental health challenges of newcomers
- Help newcomers become actively involved in their local community or neighbourhood
- Ensure newcomer women have dedicated social support programs focussed on their needs
- Help newcomer seniors become aware of and access supports and services available to them
- Help newcomer youth feel welcome and receive the support they need to excel

**Newcomers are culturally integrated** – newcomers have and seize opportunities to be actively engaged, feel part of Canadian culture and understand Canadian values. Newcomers can practice and share their own culture and learn about and interact with other cultures. Newcomers understand the social and cultural norms of various cultures and are able to practice them appropriately.

## Priorities to guide a three-year action plan

- Build awareness and respect amongst cultures
- Increase access to shared and public space, where ethno-cultural communities can gather, celebrate cultures and learn from each other
- Promote cross-cultural interactions and diversity through arts/media/recreation
- Nurture and celebrate diversity and the multi-cultural identity of York Region

**Newcomers are civically and politically integrated** – newcomers understand, can access and trust the Canadian government, policing services and the political and justice systems. Newcomers take active roles in community building and take leadership roles within organizations and institutions.

## Priorities for a three-year action plan

- Promote and monitor diversity for leadership roles within organizations and institutions
- Increase newcomers' opportunities to build their skills and increase learning through volunteering
- Help newcomers understand their rights and responsibilities so they can become actively engaged and civic-minded residents of Canada
- Ensure organizations commit and practise values of equity and diversity
- Strengthen relationships between newcomer communities and policing services, justice, government and political systems

## Developing A Three-Year Action Plan

The Community Partnership Council will develop a three-year action plan to implement the priorities set out in the Strategy. Action items will include identifying indicators and key partners, engaging the community, and gaining commitment from funders, organizations, the public and private sector to commit to the community results described above.

After three years, the Council will report on the community's progress in advancing the results. The action plan will be revisited at that time to determine whether any changes or improvements are required to the course of action.

## Next Steps And Initial Successes Resulting From The Strategy

The proposed next steps will begin with a community launch of the Strategy in the Fall of 2011. The launch event will be a forum that allows for innovation through dialogues and discussions for moving the Strategy to creating meaningful actions and solutions.

The Region in collaboration with Community Partnership Council will be developing actions as initial successes of the Strategy including:

- Releasing profiles on the immigrant priority groups (Women, Youth, Seniors and the Francophone community) for service planning and increase understanding of the unique needs of these groups.
- Maximizing the use of the York Region Immigration Portal website to provide current and relevant information to newcomers and the organizations that support them. The Portal would serve as

an on-line hub for sharing knowledge and hosting research and planning documents created by community organizations.

- Exploring new partnerships and the creation of a funders table that will help identify and guide community investments and resource allocations to achieve effective community results in York Region.
- Exploring an International Educated Professionals conference, which if funding is secured, would involve a one-day conference that connects levels of government, professional associations, employers and newcomers together to network and learn about the Canadian workplace.
- Establishing a Municipal Diversity Reference Group that would build on existing diversity/race relations initiatives in local municipalities and would provide a forum for them to engage in collaborative planning, discuss common needs, identify possible tools for other municipalities and best practices. It can also act as a vehicle for public education and awareness in York Region. The Municipal Diversity Reference Group would work closely with the York Regional Police's Diversity and Cultural Resources Bureau and be coordinated through the Region.





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## *The York Region Immigration Portal*

*This is a one-stop community-based website for newcomers and anyone who is new to the Region. It provides information about local government services, community programs, services and supports. The York Region Immigration Portal can help you find information about living, working and learning in York Region.*

*You can find a full copy of the The York Region Immigration Strategy on the portal at:*

***[www.yorkwelcome.ca](http://www.yorkwelcome.ca)***

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