



Community and Health Services
Office of the Commissioner

Memorandum

TO: Members of Committee of the Whole
FROM: Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services
DATE: March 5, 2014
RE: **York Region Diversity and Inclusion Dialogues**

This memo is to advise that a series of Diversity and Inclusion Dialogues will be held throughout York Region this spring. The Dialogues are focused on promoting the benefits of diversity and documenting ways that communities are becoming more welcoming and inclusive.

Immigration is a main driver for York Region's population growth, with 10,000 to 12,000 immigrants landing here each year on average. In 2011, the immigrant population made up 45 percent of the population in York Region and this is expected to increase to 55 percent by 2031. The Region's population is also ethno-culturally and linguistically diverse, with more than 200 distinct ethnic origins and 113 mother tongue languages reported.

Hosting Diversity and Inclusion Dialogues is an initiative being led by the Municipal Multicultural Reference Group (MMRG). The MMRG is a working group of the Community Partnership Council (CPC), which was established by Regional Council in 2010 to support the integration of newcomers. The CPC is co-chaired by Mayor Frank Scarpitti, City of Markham, and Stephen Lam, Director, Catholic Community Services of York Region. The CPC collaborated with the Region to develop and implement *The York Region Immigration Settlement Strategy*. The Dialogues are a deliverable of the Strategy and support the community result of making York Region more welcoming and inclusive.

The Dialogues will be held in each of the nine local municipalities with stakeholders who represent the Region's diversity, including leaders from newcomer communities, ethno-cultural communities, faith communities, long-term resident communities, employers, local municipalities and mainstream agencies.

The Dialogues will be two hours in length, beginning with an explanation of the purpose of the Dialogues followed by a presentation on immigration and diversity in York Region.

The participants will then break into groups and through facilitated conversations, will share their perspectives on the role that immigration and diversity have in stimulating innovation, economic performance and community vibrancy; the ways in which the Region can benefit more fully from the diverse backgrounds and potential of newcomers; and steps that can be taken to create more inclusive communities. Those that are not able to participate at the sessions will have an opportunity to provide their input through an online survey.

The input gathered from the Dialogues will be used to develop a framework for a *York Region Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Charter*, which will be a collective commitment to actions that build a more welcoming and inclusive York Region. Council will be provided with an update on the Dialogues and the progress of the Charter later in 2015.

Adelina Urbanski
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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