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Media Release

York Region settlement strategy to create welcoming and inclusive communities for all residents

Have your say! Community consultations and public outreach campaign underway

NEWMARKET – The Regional Municipality of York, in collaboration with the Community Partnership Council (CPC) for York Region’s Local Immigration Partnership initiative, is conducting extensive public community consultations to help to develop a made-in-York Region strategy that creates a welcoming and vibrant community for all York Region residents.

Results of the general public consultations will help confirm the results of preliminary consultations and shape York Region’s strategy.

“The strategy will focus on improving the coordination of settlement services and labour market integration, ensuring that all residents in this Region feel welcome and can fully contribute to our communities,” said York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch. “By achieving these goals, all York Region residents will benefit.”

“By helping new Canadians integrate more quickly, The York Region Local Immigration Partnership initiative will empower these men and women to succeed in our community,” said the Honourable Peter Kent, Member of Parliament for Thornhill.

To date, almost 250 York Region community agencies and 700 newcomers have provided information about how current programs and service levels within our communities are meeting the needs of newcomers. Feedback on the perceptions that newcomers have regarding the challenges related to the settlement and integration process have also been gathered.

Some of the initial consultation findings include that newcomers are:

- Major contributors to the economy; many become homeowners within the first year of arriving to York Region
- Highly skilled and educated; the majority of recent immigrants who are working age come to York Region with a university education or higher
- Eager to seek opportunities for cross-cultural learning that can help them integrate into the local workforce and their communities

“While these consultations have identified some unique themes about settlement issues in York Region, they also confirm some of what we already know,” said Town of Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Co-Chair of the CPC. “Specifically, that a successful strategy involves collaboration from all members of the community and not just those who are most impacted. Everyone has a role to play in building a welcoming and inclusive community.”

The next step in the community consultation process is to engage the general public and confirm the findings of the initial consultations. Residents, organizations and agencies across York Region are encouraged to provide feedback by completing the following online survey at www.yorkwelcome.ca. The survey is available between November 15 to 30, 2010.

“According to the 2006 Census, over 46,600 recent immigrants arrived in York Region between 2001 and 2006,” said Town of Markham Deputy Mayor Jack Heath, Chair of the Region’s Community and Health Services Committee. “It is important that we find ways to help newcomers and long-term residents collaborate and successfully create socially and

economically vibrant communities.”

“Since being appointed in February 2010, the Community Partnership Council has successfully shaped the framework of this strategy,” said CPC Co-Chair Stephen Lam, Director of Immigrant Services and Community Programs and Catholic Community Services of York Region. “These early results demonstrate the commitment of this group to accomplish their goal in developing strategies that will strengthen our communities and benefit all York Region residents.”

A full report outlining the findings of the community consultations and the made-in-York Region strategy will be presented to York Regional Council in spring 2011.

The York Region CPC is comprised of individuals representing a variety of community stakeholder groups who bring a wide range of professional and personal experience. The CPC aims to:

- Improve access to and coordination of immigrant integration services (settlement services, language training and labour market integration)
- Improve labour market outcomes for immigrants
- Strengthen regional awareness and capacity to successfully integrate immigrants

This initiative is funded by the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

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