

The Regional Municipality of York  
Human Services Planning Coalition  
Inclusivity Action Plan  
Summary of Major Activities  
June 2005-December 2008

In December 2003, ethno-cultural inclusivity was designated a priority for the Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC). The HSPC established the Inclusivity Action Group.

In January 2005, the Inclusivity Action Group hosted an Inclusivity Summit, which brought together 188 participants from 95 organizations to endorse a made- in York Region Action Plan.

The Inclusivity Action Plan (IAP) sought to build community capacity, establish relationships and networks, create communication tools and develop organization resources.

A total of 88 participants from 47 organizations participated in the IAP Steering Committee and six working groups. The following are highlights of 22 major outputs of IAP.

### **1. Steering Committee and overall**

*Co-ordinating the planning and implementation of the IAP.*

#### **Highlights**

- Held information session to introduce IAP work plan to potential funders of inclusivity initiatives, settlement and language training services.
- Held an information session highlighting the successes of the IAP made in 2005 and 2006.
- Created an administrative team comprised of 8 Job Creation Program participants to support IAP Steering Committee and working groups.
- Held the Blue Sky Retreat to review the accomplishments and challenges of the IAP and discuss recommendations for future inclusivity initiatives.
- Commissioned external researchers to conduct a program evaluation of the IAP.

### **1. Welcome Centre Working Group**

*Establishing Welcome Centres will act as service and information hubs for all newcomers to York Region.*

#### **Highlights**

- Welcome resource centre model developed in collaboration with more than 25 organizations.

- The first Welcome Centre Immigrants Service was established in June 2007 in Vaughan providing integrated services for newcomers in one location. Citizenship and Immigration Canada is the major funder. Four more welcome centres are planned for York Region.

## **2. English Language Development Working Group**

*One of the most important skills for an immigrant is English. The ability to communicate in English is one of the most important factors in academic achievement, finding employment and integrating into the community.*

### **Highlights**

- The preparation of a report that describes the language development needs in York Region. The report contains an inventory of current language programs, a demographic analysis of the immigrant population by home language, an analysis of plans for subdivisions, a summary of findings from focus groups with ESL/LINC students, gaps in language training programs and recommendations.
- The preparation of a report on “Immigrant Language Issues in the Workplace”. This report contains the results of focus groups and interviews held with York Region Employers to ascertain the ‘English as a Second Language’ barriers that exist within the business community.

## **3. Increasing Awareness Working Group**

*We must promote the value and strength inclusivity brings to our community.*

### **Highlights**

- Creation of the IAP project brand including the logo “a pinwheel” and tag line “Winds of Change”.
- Sponsoring of Rogers Cable TV’s production of two series of “One on One” featuring success stories of members of various ethno-cultural communities in York Region.
- Development of consistent messaging
  - Identification and promotion of York Region success stories
  - Promotion of the IAP

## **4. Learning Opportunities for Children**

*The children of immigrants are the future of our community.*

### **Highlights**

- Collection of best practices and curriculum units for those who work with children.

- Establishment of the Harmony Movement in the YDSB and YCDSB to develop leaders who are sensitive to the issues of diversity and dedicated to addressing discrimination in their schools.
- Engagement of student artists in creating a play which featured the multicultural profiles of York Region.
- Development of a program plan and funding proposal on youth mentoring program in York Region schools. Funding opportunities to implement the program are being explored.

## **5. Volunteer Leadership Development Working Group**

*Businesses and employers need to recognize that diversity in the workplace promotes innovation, stimulates teamwork and helps expand markets for goods and services. As the diversity of the population expands, new links are forged with the world.*

### **Highlights**

- Establishment of an inventory of human services organizations which seek volunteers from ethno-cultural communities.
- Held a community dialogue for human services agencies in regard to volunteer management which advance ethno-cultural diversity.
- Held various information sessions on opportunities of volunteering and civic engagement targeting ethno-cultural communities in collaboration with the Maytree Foundation, abcGTA initiative and the Town of Markham.

## **6. Organizational Development Working Group**

*York Region's recent immigrant population generally has a higher level of education than non- immigrants. But it takes about 15 years for an immigrant to integrate. We need to be more effective at integrating immigrants into the workforce.*

### **Highlights**

- Development of the Charter of Inclusivity
- Development of an Assessment Tool outlining common criteria used to define organizational inclusivity
- Development of the program plan of the Circle of Inclusivity Champions and Charter Organizations and discussion with potential funders.

Collectively we are working towards building a more ethno-culturally inclusive York Region where immigrants are able to contribute their rich experiences and skills to social and economic prosperity.

**Improving communication \*Creating awareness \*Promoting representation**