



Community and Health Services Department
Office of the Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Health Services Committee Members

FROM: Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: June 16, 2011

RE: **York Region Immigration Portal Wins IABC Virtuoso Award**

It is my great pleasure to inform you that The Regional Municipality of York was recently awarded an International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Virtuoso Excellence Award in the Division I – Communication Management: Electronic and Digital Communication Category for the York Region Immigration Portal (“the Portal”). The Portal was recognized by the IABC as an innovative computer based communication tool that has been effective in reaching internal and external audiences. Since 1995, IABC (London, ON) has recognized outstanding communications and creative professionals from across the city and region through their Virtuoso Awards program. In addition to celebrating excellence in communications, the Virtuoso Awards recognize the best in creative strategy and design.

The Portal was officially launched in 2008 and is an integrated one-stop website designed to welcome, attract, retain and support newcomers to the region. The Portal provides comprehensive, up-to-date information to help newcomers successfully transition into the Region’s local communities.

In March 2009, there was an opportunity to refresh the Portal’s original design and content based on established best practices. The goal was to create a better user experience including easier navigation capabilities, improved user interface, a fresh look and intuitive design. Lashbrook Marketing and Public Relations, a London-based firm, was hired to assist in designing a refreshed and innovative, welcoming website and to make the necessary technical upgrades to assist with tracking and monitoring the website’s usage. The refreshed Portal was launched in April 2010.

York Region is a destination of choice for thousands of newcomers annually. Each year, more immigrants decide to call York Region their home – making it more important than ever to focus on initiatives supporting local integration. Since April 2010, the Portal has recorded over 8,600 visits from 99 countries/territories. The top countries being: Canada, Russia, Ukraine and United States.

As you may remember, the new features of the Portal were presented to Council on January 27, 2011. Since then, a new feature of the York Region Immigration Portal is the integration of the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative which will feature the Immigration Settlement Strategy once it is finalized. It is anticipated that the Portal will be a tool to support and deliver actions coming from the Strategy. The Portal also supports Goal Five of the Multi-Year Plan – To foster social inclusion and economic opportunities by addressing the needs of a growing and diverse community by providing information about local government and community services, programs and supports.

I would like to thank Lashbrook Marketing and Public Relations for their contribution to the refresh of the York Region Immigration Portal as well as staff in the Strategic Service Integration and Policy Branch for their leadership in coordinating this project.

Adelina Urbanski,
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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