

# More immigrants picking York Region over Toronto

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minority group, having increased by 64.4 per cent from 1996 to 2001. Markham has an even higher percentage of immigrants than Toronto with 52.9 per cent of its population composed of immigrants, compared to 49.4 per cent of Toronto's population.

In Richmond Hill, Filipino residents were the fastest growing visible minority group, having increased by 91 per cent from 1996 to 2001.

In Vaughan, the percentage of

South Asian residents grew by 85.6 per cent from 1996 to 2001.

In Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Markham, less than 50 per cent of the population identifies English as their mother tongue.

An increasing number of immigrants coming to Canada settle in York Region, rather than Toronto, according to data from Citizen and Immigration Canada.

"That could change the way we do service delivery," said Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, director of policy and program support for the region's community services and housing department.

Staff have already taken action to meet the needs of the region's increasingly diverse population, according to a report presented Wednesday.

### TRANSLATION COSTS UP

The department's budget for translation services has increased by 168 per cent from \$89,965.52 in 2000 to \$241,700 in 2002.

Job openings are posted in the ethnic press and translation services are available 24 hours a day through York Region Neighbourhood Services.

Staff are considering more

strategies to meet the needs of different cultural groups, according to the report, including:

- Enhancing translation and cultural interpretation services;
- Introducing anti-discrimination measures in programs and policies;
- Recognizing cultural differences in planning and policy making; and
- Establishing partnerships with agencies and organizations that represent diverse communities.

So far, the region's efforts have not satisfied Stephen Lam, director of immigrant services and commu-

nity programs for Catholic Community Services of York Region.

"They haven't done enough. I don't think they have a comprehensive plan on diversity training."

### TROUBLE ACCESSING SERVICES

Mr. Lam said he frequently meets clients who have trouble accessing mainstream services.

"They don't know how to get help, they don't even know what's available," he said.

"The climate is changing so (the region) needs to change their way of doing things."

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