

# Job plan focuses on new Canadian residents

BY ROY GREEN  
Staff Writer

A recent immigrant to Canada, Deepanne Bopitiya found it difficult to land a job despite her masters-degree in environmental science and years of experience with projects in her native Sri Lanka.

It's an example of just one of many problems facing newcomers here and one of the reasons York Region is launching an ethno-cultural inclusivity plan.

"Finding a job that fits my qualifications is my biggest challenge," Ms Bopitiya said.

"Employers are hesitant to hire unless you have some Canadian work experience."

Fortunately, Ms Bopitiya is getting that experience through an internship program called Career Bridge.

In fact, she is interning in the region's human services area, helping implement a new project called

The Road to Inclusivity: An Action Plan for York Region.

Because about 40 per cent of the region's 850,000 residents are foreign born, it's important to protect cultural roots and heritage, but not at the expense of duplicating services in different communities.

Coalition partners, police, school boards, hospitals, social service agencies, municipalities, religious organizations and public health, face the challenge of mak-

ing sure mainstream services are inclusive to all individuals, regardless of origin, said Susan Taylor, director of the region's human services planning coalition.

The plan will focus on three themes: improving communication, promoting ethno-cultural representation and creating ethno-cultural awareness, Ms Taylor said.

The first stage is gathering input via a newly designed survey from human services providers, cultural

communities and residents.

Public school board director Bill Hogarth, who is also co-chairperson of the coalition, said there has been a tremendous change in the ethnic demographics of the region.

The public board has already established a reception centre in Richmond Hill.

A draft action plan, developed from input from the survey, is expected to be released in November, Ms Taylor said.

# IBM hires 600 workers this year

BY PATRICK MANGION  
Staff Writer

Hundreds of recent graduates and seasoned industry professionals are expected to join IBM's Markham software lab by the end of this year.

IBM Canada Ltd. has hired 600 workers already this year, with plans to bring on a total of 1,200 new employees across Canada by January.

The announcement represents a 50-per-cent increase in IBM Canada hirings from last year. About 65 per cent of the hirings will be in the Toronto area, 25 per cent in Western Canada and 5 per cent each in Montreal and Ottawa.

While declining to place a number on how many workers will be hired at the company's Markham headquarters, spokesperson Mike Quinn said the job openings will bring the total number of IBM employees in Canada to more than 20,000 by 2005.

"Did we sign a mega deal? No. I would point to the evolution of on-demand business and on-demand computing and our efforts to meet the growing needs of our customers," Mr Quinn said.

Job openings at the high-technology giant include finance analysts, software sales, software development, systems integra-

tion specialists and technical support. The openings coincide with the \$200 million US invested globally at IBM sites for skills and development training and the majority of a \$322-million Canadian investment earmarked for research and development at the Markham software lab.

Along with professional level jobs, such as management consultants and project managers, IBM anticipates one-third of the hirings will come from Canadian university graduates in high-technology fields such as computer science and engineering. Overall, IBM plans to hire 19,000 people this year, bringing its global workforce to about 330,000.

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