

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

Hamilton's workplaces are facing a growing trend in diversity. This is largely attributed to the wave of immigrants and refugees from predominantly Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean making Hamilton their destination of choice. There are about 120 languages spoken in the City of Hamilton. Immigration now accounts for approximately 85% of Hamilton's total population growth and that percentage could rise to 100% over the next decade.

Here are some quick facts from statistics Canada 2006 census data.

- **1 in 5 Canadians will belong to a racially visible group in 2017. 1 in 25 people will be Aboriginal.**
- **For every 100 racially visible persons old enough to leave the labour force in 2017 (55-64 years of age), there will be 142 racially visible persons old enough to join the labour force (15-24 years of age).**
- **By 2017, 73% of the racially visible population will be under 50yrs old, while only 59% of the rest of the population will be under 50.**
- **Immigrants in Hamilton have the lowest employment rate among eight major Canadian cities. It is 58% compared to around 75% for Halifax and Calgary.**
- **Labour force participation rates for immigrant women is 54.6%, Canadian born is 79.6%**
- **Labour force participation rates for immigrant men is 77.6%, Canadian born is 86.6%**

The recent statistics indicate that a large number of potential employees will be immigrants. It makes good business sense for organizations, institutions and businesses to adopt policies and practices of diversity, in order to make them more inclusive and culturally aware. Employers should make a commitment to providing inclusive workplaces and the process for initiating and implementing inclusivity in the workplace begins with a commitment to the process. Illustrated below is a sample format of how organizations and institutions can incorporate diversity and inclusivity policies into their frameworks.

- **Conduct an organizational or institutional self assessment on diversity and inclusivity. Review policies and frameworks to see whether it reflects principles of diversity.**
- **Build commitment within the organization, institution or business by initiating a process of diversity policy development by the Board and other key stakeholders.**
- **Establish community partnership with other groups involved in diversity and inclusivity work.**
- **Establish an advisory committee to develop a communication plan and to monitor and guide the process.**
- **Raise awareness of and identify issues of diversity and inclusivity that need to be addressed within the organization, institution or business.**

- **Allocate responsibility and resources for implementation. Hire an expert facilitator to implement a diversity and inclusivity training program for staff.**

Both employers and employees need to adopt inclusive practices in order to adequately function within a growing diverse workforce. Outlined below are some examples.

- **Recruit and hire people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.**
- **Give everyone a chance for promotion.**
- **Post all job openings.**
- **Avoid the tendency to interact and promote only members of similar racial or ethnic backgrounds.**
- **Provide a designated prayer space for members of diverse religious faith.**
- **Establish a policy whereby employees can request absences to recognize religious holidays without fear of losing their jobs.**
- **Establish an internal procedure for employees to report incidents of subtle and overt racism, discrimination, hate or harassment. Publicize the policy widely.**
- **Foster an open, inclusive and flexible work environment, so everybody feels at ease and can participate fully.**
- **Avoid singling out employees of a particular race or ethnicity to "handle" diversity issues on behalf of everyone else.**
- **Acknowledge the inputs of every employee. This will make every staff member feel valued and respected.**
- **Vary your lunch partners. Seek out co-workers of different backgrounds, from different departments, and at different levels in the company.**
- **Organize forums on topics about anti-racism, diversity, culture to name a few. It creates an opportunity for dialogue and discussions about the issues.**
- **Start a mentoring program that pairs veteran employees with newcomers.**
- **Organize potlucks and other events which promote diverse cultural heritage. This provides an opportunity for colleagues to interact, mingle or share highlights of their culture with another person.**
- **Make cafeterias and food more religiously and culturally-appropriate.**
- **Make workplaces, information and policies linguistically appropriate to accommodate the multiple language needs of workers.**