

YORK REGION

Newcomer Guide

JANUARY 2021

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 6Z1
1-877-464-9675



York Region



COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, some of the programs and services listed in this guide may not be available. Some service providers are offering services through telephone or in-person, while others may be offering services virtually. Please check with the service provider or your local municipality for information about whether programs and services are operating and how they are being delivered.

York Region has also developed a web page with [resources](#) to support newcomers during COVID-19.

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This guide will be reviewed annually.

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request. Please email aoda@york.ca or call 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72149 or TTY: 1-866-512-6228 (for deaf or hard of hearing)



1. Welcome to York Region

The Regional Municipality of York stretches north from Toronto to Lake Simcoe and includes many hectares of protected Greenbelt. York Region’s diversity is evident in our nine local municipalities, geography, economic development and population.

York Region is home to 1.2 million residents of all ages, backgrounds and interests. As one of Canada’s fastest growing communities, York Region welcomes many newcomers each year to its nine local municipalities, which include:

- Town of Aurora
- Town of East Gwillimbury
- Town of Georgina
- Township of King
- City of Markham
- Town of Newmarket
- City of Richmond Hill
- City of Vaughan
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville



Town of East Gwillimbury



GEORGINA





Did You Know?



York Region is the sixth largest municipality in Canada by population with four provincially chosen growth centres in Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and Newmarket



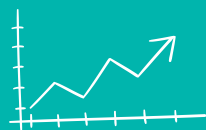
Our Region is made up of urban, suburban and rural neighbourhoods. We have farmlands, wetlands, forests and the built-up areas of our nine cities and towns



People from all over the world live here. Our residents speak more than **120** different languages and come from **230** distinct ethnic origins



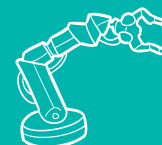
We celebrate diversity. More than 51,000 recent immigrants to Canada live in York Region (immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2011 and 2016) and **47%** of all residents were born outside of Canada



As Ontario's third largest business hub, York Region is a top destination in the Toronto area for business, talent and investment. It is home to more than 54,000 businesses and **650,000** jobs



We are the second largest financial services cluster in Ontario, with more than 2,900 industry related businesses and over **40,000** jobs



We are Canada's second largest technology hub, with more than **4,300** companies in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) cluster



Global ICT giants such as AMD, GE, Huawei, IBM, Lenovo, Nokia, Oracle, Qualcomm, SAP, Siemens and Toshiba have offices in York Region



We are home to a highly educated workforce. About **70%** of the working population has completed post-secondary education



York Region is home to York University and Seneca College campuses and is just a commute away from **18** world-class post-secondary institutions



York Region is home to world-class hospitals. Cortellucci Vaughan hospital is now under construction and will soon be the first hospital in Canada to have fully integrated "smart" technology systems



There are lots of activities for families here. We are home to many attractions including Canada's largest amusement park, art galleries, theatres, heritage sites, beaches, parks and trails, farms, breweries and wineries



2. Arriving

There are many programs and services available to people who have recently arrived in Canada, Ontario or York Region. The federal government legislates in areas of national importance and runs programs, services and benefits nationally. The provincial government legislates in areas of significance across Ontario and runs programs, services and benefits across the province.

Navigating Government Resources

To learn about employment and social development services and benefits available to all Canadians, please visit the [Service Canada](#) website or a local office. Service Canada is a federal institution that provides Canadians with a single point of access to a wide range of government services and benefits, including:

- Employment insurance
- Job searches
- Passports
- Pensions
- Social Insurance Numbers
- Records of employment

[Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) facilitates the arrival of immigrants, provides

protection to refugees and offers programming to help newcomers settle in Canada. It looks after:

- Settlement services
- Visas to visit, study or work in Canada
- Citizenship applications
- Passport applications
- Permanent resident cards
- Refugee protection
- Sponsorship





ServiceOntario

Service Ontario is a division of the Government of Ontario and provides Ontarians with an easy, cost-effective way to access government services. Visit the [Service Ontario](#) website or a local office for information about:

- Ontario photo cards
- Health cards (OHIP)
- Driver's licences
- Driver and vehicle fees
- Hunting or fishing licences
- Marriage, birth and death certificates
- Business registrations

Each of the Region's nine local cities and towns runs its own programs and events, and provides local services for residents, including:

- Libraries
- Recreation facilities
- Community programs and events for adults and children

Access York

In York Region, the [Access York](#) contact centre provides information, referrals and application services for York Region programs and services.

A customer service representative can provide you with information about topics such as:

- Child care
- Urgent dental coverage
- Public transportation
- Parks and trails
- Social assistance programs

- Bylaw services
- Building permits
- Property taxes

Please visit their [websites](#) or City Halls for helpful information about each local community.



York Region's Website

York Region's website (york.ca) has information about programs and services for its residents and businesses, including health, transportation, environment, community support and recreation.

The [News Room](#) section has media releases, statements, announcements and event postings to keep you up-to-date about the community.

The [Careers](#) section provides [job listings](#), an online application system, a [job search handbook](#) and other resources that can help you build your career.

The website also offers [interactive maps](#) to help you find things like police stations, bus stops, libraries, places of worship, government offices, settlement services and schools in York Region.



Settlement Services

Many settlement services are free and confidential and are available to permanent Canadian residents and refugees. Settlement services are offered by settlement agencies to help newcomers adjust to their life in Canada. Settlement agencies are also known as newcomer service agencies or immigrant- or refugee-serving agencies. Some schools, libraries and community centres may also offer some settlement services or programs.

At settlement agencies, experienced settlement workers can answer questions related to living, learning, working and playing in York Region. They can also provide tip sheets and checklists to give newcomers a head start on their new environment. Settlement workers can help with the following:

- Finding a translator or interpreter
- Filling out forms and applications
- Assessing skills, training and experience
- Accrediting education and work credentials
- Getting a language assessment
- Finding a place to live
- Signing children up for school or child care
- Looking for a job



- Registering for language classes
- Finding community programs and social services
- Building an initial personal or professional network

Some settlement agencies may offer additional support or referrals for refugees, such as:

- Specialized support for refugee women and youth
- Trauma counselling and mental health services
- Settlement services in a specific language

For additional information on settlement services near you, please use the free newcomer services search on the [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) page. The tool will help you find resources close to the postal code or city you provide.

Welcome Centres

In York Region, five accessible service hub centres known as Welcome Centres help immigrants settle and integrate into Canada.

Welcome Centres are located along popular public transit routes and provide a range of settlement related services and information to newcomers under one roof, including employment supports and language classes. For individual program calendars and specific services offered at a Welcome Centre near you, please visit the [Welcome Centre](#) website or contact 1-877-761-1155.





Good to know



- Some agencies can charge you a fee or receive payment for offering you advice or support with your immigration or citizenship related questions. These agencies are called “authorized” representatives. To find out more, please visit the [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) website
- International students should work directly with their school’s administration to access settlement services available to them while they are studying
- Individuals may also qualify for pre-arrival services if they have been approved for permanent residence in Canada and are currently living outside Canada. Pre-arrival services can help you prepare for the move to Canada, get your work experience and credentials recognized in Canada, help you search for a job and connect you with free services after you arrive in Canada

The Welcome Centres in York Region include:

Markham North Welcome Centre

8400 Woodbine Avenue, Units 102-103
Markham, Ontario, L3R 4N7
1-877-761-1155

Markham South Welcome Centre

7220 Kennedy Road, Unit 8
Markham, Ontario, L3R 7P2
1-877-761-1155

Newmarket Welcome Centre

16655 Yonge Street, Unit 26
Newmarket, Ontario, L3X 1V6
1-877-761-1155

Richmond Hill Welcome Centre

9325 Yonge Street, Unit 31A
Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4C 0A8
1-877-761-1155

Vaughan Welcome Centre

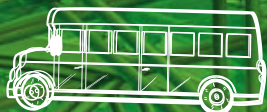
9100 Jane Street, Unit 56
Vaughan, Ontario, L4K 0A4
1-877-761-1155

Mobile Outreach Unit

Visits East Gwillimbury and Georgina areas by appointment
1-877-761-1155

In addition to core services, government, community and social service agencies provide a wide range of onsite services like family counselling, legal resources, health information and supports for youth, women and seniors. If you do not speak English, an interpreter may be called to help you.

To locate a range of support service providers in York Region please visit 211.ca



3. Moving Around

Whether you travel within or outside York Region, there are many ways to get to where you need to go. York Region manages more than 4,200 lane kilometers of Regional roads. Roads are maintained and improved regularly, assisting in the safe and efficient transport of goods and people between urban and rural locations. York Region public transportation buses are also readily available, offering a convenient commute throughout York Region.

Public Transportation

York Region has local transit ([York Region Transit or YRT](#)) and rapid transit ([VIVA](#) and [GO Transit](#)) services in all nine cities and towns. Almost 130 routes keep residents connected within York Region, and to transit services in the [City of Toronto](#), the Regions of [Peel](#) and [Durham](#) and beyond.

To search the best route for your next trip and to print a trip plan, visit the [Trip Planner](#) or the [Real-Time Map](#) tool on the YRT website.

YRT offers travellers different fare options, including adult, youth, senior and child. To pay for your transit fare you will need a [PRESTO card](#), the YRT Pay App on your smart phone or cash.

Transit [fares](#) and [routes](#) are subject to change. The [York Region Transit](#) website is regularly updated with the most recent information.



myRide Travel Training

Planning your first trip on public transit can be confusing. To help, YRT offers [myRide Travel Training](#) for customers of all ages and abilities. If you request myRide Travel Training, a YRT representative will meet you at an agreed upon transit stop to take you on a guided route of your choice. There is no cost for this service except for your transit fare. Customers who would like to become more confident riding YRT and VIVA independently can book an appointment by calling 1-877-464-9675 at extension 75867 or emailing myride@york.ca



Good to know



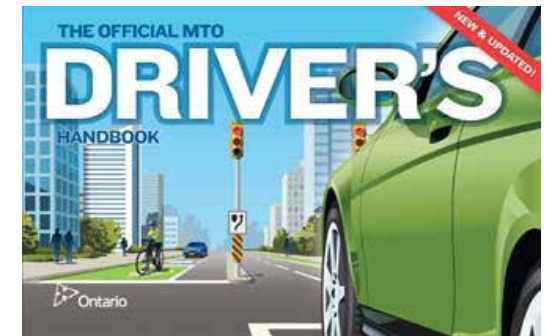
- As a newcomer to Canada you cannot apply for an International Driving Permit (IDP) in Canada to drive in Canada. The IDP is issued by your home country before you arrive. Canadians can apply for an IDP in Canada to operate a motor vehicle abroad
- Once you have a licence, you will have to renew it before the expiry date printed on your licence. If you have a G1 or G2 licence and let it expire, you will need to begin your driver's licence application process from the beginning
- PRESTO cards can be purchased online or at YRT PRESTO fare agents as well as York Region Transit, Toronto Transit Commission and GO Transit Terminals
- Local YRT buses still accept cash fares on board, but if you pay with a PRESTO card your ride will cost less
- York Region Transit offers transportation services through Mobility On-Request Paratransit for people with a disability, and through [Mobility Plus](#) for the ride sharing program

Driver's Licence

To legally drive a car in Canada, you will need a driver's licence issued by your provincial or territorial government. You must have it with you whenever you drive. To get an Ontario driver's licence you need to apply in-person at a [DriveTest centre](#). Visit the [Ontario Ministry of Transportation](#) page for information about what you need to apply for a licence.

For the first 60 days of your stay in Ontario, you can use a valid driver's licence from your home province, state or country. You need to be at least 16 years of age and have proper insurance coverage for the vehicle you drive. You must also obey all traffic laws and rules of the road.

Visitors staying in Ontario for longer than three months should get an [International Driving Permit](#) (IDP) in their home country.



Vehicle Insurance

In Canada, it is illegal to drive without car insurance. If you regularly drive a car belonging to someone else like a relative or friend, you should make sure that you are listed on their car insurance plan.

The cost of insurance depends on your vehicle, age, driving record, where you live and your driving experience. In Ontario, insurance can be purchased through an independent insurance provider like a bank or insurance company.



4. Living in York Region

York Region is a welcoming community with readily available newcomer resources and services. This section will introduce you to important information about living in York Region, including following laws and finding a home.

Rules and Laws

As a newcomer to Canada, take time to learn and understand your rights and freedoms, the duties you have and the laws you have to obey. To learn more about the Canadian justice system, visit the [Department of Justice](#) website.

The [Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General](#) provides Ontario citizens and residents with a single point of contact for questions about Ontario's legal system, including:

- Finding a lawyer
- Tickets and fines
- Lawsuits and disputes
- Family and criminal law
- Human rights
- Wills and estates

Municipal bylaws are local laws that keep communities orderly, safe and clean. Bylaws may relate to things like smoking, parking, garbage disposal, messy yards or zoning. For a list of your local bylaws visit your city or town's website. For a list of bylaws passed by York Regional Council, visit york.ca

Banking

A bank account and a good credit score are important for many purchases, including getting a cell phone, leasing a car, paying rent and buying a home.

Visit the [Financial Consumer Agency of Canada](#) for information about banking in Canada. When you are ready to open an account, visit different financial institutions in your area to learn about the products and services they provide to decide which is best for you.

Buying a Home

Buying a home is an exciting and complex process. If you are planning to buy a home in York Region, you may find it useful to speak to a [real estate agent](#) and a personal financial advisor at your bank about your plans.

Real estate agents are licensed professionals who have knowledge of the communities they serve. They can help you search for a home, arrange for a professional home inspection, support you in real estate negotiations, connect you to financial advisors, real estate lawyers or property inspectors and help you choose a property in York Region.



Personal financial advisors will help you understand your financial options. They may refer you to a mortgage specialist, who will provide you with information about financing options. The location where you do your day-to-day banking can also assist.

The [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation](#) (CMHC) offers useful tools and information when buying a home. The CMHC website includes the following guides:

- Buying your first home in Canada
- Homebuyers Checklist – A newcomer’s guide and workbook
- What to look for when buying a home
- Making an offer and closing the deal
- Location, Location, Location – How to find a home of your own
- Choosing the right mortgage for you
- What to do if you are having trouble making your mortgage payments

You can also visit [REALTOR.ca](#) to look for properties, find a real estate agent, use a mortgage calculator or find some helpful tip sheets. [Homes & Land of York, Simcoe, Muskoka and Parry Sound Regions](#) magazine is another resource that you can use during your search for a home.

Renting

Your first home in York Region may be a rented house or apartment. Renting gives you the option of looking for a home to buy without feeling the pressure of making a quick decision.

If you are interested in renting a home in York Region, begin by speaking with a settlement worker at a Welcome Centre or a real estate agent, searching on the Internet or looking through the classified ads in a local newspaper.

CMHC offers useful tools and information when renting a home. The CMHC website includes the following guides:

- Renting in Canada: What newcomers need to know
- Signing a lease
- Keeping your home in good condition
- Checking out a home or apartment
- How to find and rent a home if you have a large family

If you and your landlord have a disagreement or you have questions about your rights and responsibilities as a renter, contact the [Landlord and Tenant Board](#), an organization that helps to settle conflicts between landlords and tenants.



Common Types of Homes

Whether you rent or buy, you can choose from many different types of housing in York Region. Here is a description of some of the common types of homes in York Region.



Apartment

A building of units or suites of rooms that may be owned or rented. Apartment buildings usually have many floors and the units are joined together by a common hallway. Most apartment buildings will have a lobby and might share other common amenities, like a swimming pool, gym or barbecue area. The building, amenities and common areas are usually maintained by a property management company. An apartment building is also known as a “multi-family residential dwelling.”



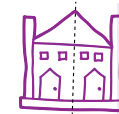
Condominium (Condo)

A building or community of buildings, such as an apartment building or town house complex, in which units are owned by individuals rather than a landlord. Condo owners elect a board of directors to manage the building and the land. Each owner pays their own mortgage, taxes and utilities and a monthly fee to cover ongoing maintenance costs.



Town House

A single-family home that is attached to one or more similar houses by shared walls. The land on which a town house sits is limited to the front and back yard. Town homes are usually two or three stories tall.



Semi-Detached Home

A single-family dwelling house that shares one common wall with the next house.



Detached Home

A stand-alone house that is usually one or two stories tall and set on its own lot of land. A detached home is often called a single-family home.



Property Taxes

When you own a property you will need to pay property taxes. Municipal governments use property taxes to pay for services and infrastructure. Taxes help to keep our communities clean and safe by paying for services like:

- Police and fire protection
- Paramedic services
- Water and waste management
- Road maintenance and snow removal
- Parks and recreation facilities
- Public transportation
- Neighbourhood infrastructure

The [Municipal Property Assessment Corporation](#) (MPAC) assesses the value of all properties in Ontario. Municipal governments set their own tax rates. York Region and your local municipal government will calculate how much property tax you will owe based on MPAC's assessed value of your home and the municipal tax rate. For more information please visit [york.ca](#)

Housing Options

As the cost of living increases, households living with low or moderate incomes may have trouble making ends meet. Some people in our community need extra support. York Region works with various partners to provide housing options for all residents, despite their income levels. To find out more about community support related to housing visit [york.ca](#)

If you are fleeing an abusive situation or if you become homeless, an emergency housing facility can provide you with temporary housing and support services. Some facilities offer exclusive shelters for women and children, families, youth or men.

For more information please call York Region:

Toll-free: 1-877-464-9675
(Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

TTY: 1-866-512-6228
(for the deaf or hard of hearing)

For emergency shelter information and support on weekends and evenings, please call 211.



Child Care and Recreation

Children need to be cared for while parents are at work or studying. Children should also be active and eat healthy food. Review the [Child, Youth and Family Services Act](#) to understand our responsibilities when it comes to the welfare of Ontario children.

Child Care

There are different types of child care available in Ontario:

- Licensed home child care
- Licensed child care centre
- Before-school and after-school care
- Unlicensed care

To learn more about the different types of child care and how they are regulated, or to search for licensed child care for your children, please visit the [Ontario Ministry of Education](#) website.

York Region has many child care centres, after school programs and family day homes. In most cases, child care in York Region is not free, but families living with low income may qualify for a subsidy to help pay for their child care costs. For more information about children's services in York Region, including programs and subsidies, visit york.ca

Recreation

Many activities for children and youth are offered by businesses and non-profit organizations in York Region. Municipalities also offer a range of recreational programs for all ages. Visit your city or town's website or stop by your local library, community centre or municipal hall to speak to someone about programs that may be of interest to you, or to pick up the local recreation guide.



Services for People with Disabilities

A disability is a cognitive, developmental, physical or sensory condition that may make it more difficult for a person to participate in the community. There are many government services available to assist people living with a disability and their families:

- The [Government of Canada](#) offers financial benefits for adults and children
- The [Government of Ontario](#) provides financial and medical support for people with disabilities
- York Region provides [Early Intervention Services](#) to support families who have children with special needs

It
starts
with
kids.



Good to know



- York Region residents have access to municipal libraries. Libraries offer free Internet access and computers equipped with the latest software and books in languages other than English or French. Visit your local library to get your free library card
- If you need an official identification card from the Government of Ontario, visit the [Service Ontario](#) website to learn about the application process and apply for an Ontario Photo Card, Ontario Driver's Licence or an Ontario Health Card
- If you apply for all of your identification cards on the same day, you will be able to renew them together instead of making separate trips to a Service Ontario office
- The [Government of Canada](#) offers a guide to the Canadian tax system and the benefits that are available to help individuals and families with payments. The [Government of Ontario](#) also offers benefits and tax credit programs
- Municipalities issue program calendars every quarter. Visit your city or town's website or pick up a program guide at the library, community centre, or municipal hall to learn more about municipally run programs for adults and youth of all abilities
- You can order your credit files and view your current credit score any time from [TransUnion](#) or [Equifax](#)

Local community centres and non-profit organizations may also provide daytime and outreach services for people and families seeking support in their daily life. A representative at your local [Welcome Centre](#) or [Access York](#) can help you find services that are available near you.

Cultural Groups and Places of Worship

York Region is a growing and vibrant community that is home to people from more than 230 distinct ethnic origins. When people move to a new area or country, they can find it helpful to connect with others who share their language, culture and customs.

In York Region, there are approximately 270 religious institutions where people take comfort in practicing their faith and spirituality. Places of worship are also a place of community and cultural activity. Positive contact with people from these institutions enhances successful community partnerships. Use the [interactive maps](#) on the York Region website to find places of worship in your neighbourhood or elsewhere in the community.

Food

Groceries: Food is essential in every culture. With a large multicultural community in York Region, there are many places that sell ingredients, food and drinks from all over the world.

Most supermarkets across York Region have an ethnic food section. You can also find familiar foods at convenience stores, specialty stores, ethnic food stores, food banks and low cost food cooperatives.

Community Gardens: York Region offers community gardens for those who want to grow their own food but need space to do it. If you are interested in gardening in your community or attending a gardening workshop, please contact a representative from one of York Region's local [community gardens](#). This list may not capture all of the community gardens currently available [York Region Food Network](#) acts as a resource for groups interested in starting up new community gardens in York Region.



Farmers' Markets: Farmers' markets offer small agricultural producers the opportunity to sell fresh, local meat and produce. Visit the [Experience York Region](#) website for a list of current farmers' markets in York Region and their operating hours.

Pets

Many York Region residents have pets in their homes. Each local city and town has its own bylaws for pet registration and off-leash areas. Please visit your city or town's website for more information.



5. Staying Healthy

All Canadian residents have access to health care through Canada's health insurance system. If you are a Canadian citizen, have applied for permanent residence, have a valid work permit, are a clergy member or have a temporary resident permit, you may qualify for public health insurance in Ontario.

Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP)

[OHIP](#) is Ontario's health-care plan offering many health services paid by the province. When you use public health-care services, you must show your health insurance card to the hospital or medical clinic. Find out if you qualify for OHIP by visiting the [Service Ontario](#) website.

You have to be a resident of Ontario for three months before you can get OHIP coverage. In some cases, the [Interim Federal Health Program](#) (IFHP) can provide temporary health insurance to refugees, protected persons and refugee claimants.

If you do not yet qualify for OHIP and are not covered by the IFHP, you can use private health insurance or receive medical attention from a walk-in clinic at a cost.

Low Cost Health Services

Free (or low cost) health care is available at the [Vaughan Community Health Centre](#), a not-for-profit, community-governed organization that provides clinical and social services to York Region residents who are facing barriers accessing health care. Services are provided at two locations in different languages within a safe, accessible and comfortable environment.

Vaughan Community Health Centre

9401 Jane Street, Suite 206
Vaughan, Ontario, L6A 4H7
905-303-8490

Keswick Site

716 The Queensway South
Keswick, Ontario, L4P 4C9
905-476-5621

You can also receive free and confidential health information and education over the phone by contacting [Health Connection](#) at 1-800-361-5653.



Good to know



- OHIP does not cover prescription medication in non-hospital settings, dental services in a dentist's office, eyeglasses and contact lenses, laser eye surgery or cosmetic surgery
- You can get fast, free and confidential medical advice by calling Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000. A Registered Nurse will ask you to answer questions so they can assess your health problem and give you advice. The service is provided in both English and French, with translation support for more than 300 languages

Finding a Family Doctor

It can be difficult to [find a family doctor](#) accepting new patients. You can also call [Health Care Connect](#) for help finding a doctor and to learn about how nurse practitioners can help you. Once you have a family doctor, you can make appointments for routine checkups, non-urgent diagnoses or treatments.

You can also visit a walk-in clinic near you if you are unable to find a family doctor and need non-urgent diagnosis or treatment, referral to a health-care specialist, support in managing a chronic condition or to receive a prescription.

If you need urgent care, go to the emergency department of your local hospital or call 911.



6. Learning

York Region has some of the best schools in Ontario. Students are welcomed from around the world and across Canada with supports to help them adapt to their new setting as fast as possible. In York Region, you will be able to improve your English or French, take a university or college course to help you advance your career and make sure your children can learn in a safe, happy and nurturing environment.

Learning an Official Language

Your ability to communicate with other people in Canada is important. Good communication will make it easier for you to find work, do your banking and shopping, get medical attention, speak to your children's teachers, make new friends and more.

Canada has two official languages: English and French. English is the most commonly spoken language in most provinces and territories. Visit a [Welcome Centre](#) near you to access language assessment services and to enrol in language classes. Child-minding accommodations and transportation allowances may be available to those who qualify. For more information about English or French language classes at a Welcome Centre, call 1-877-761-1155 or email info@welcomecentre.ca

Permanent residents who are new to Canada may have their English tested to receive their Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level. CLBs are used in Canada to describe the language ability of people learning English. CLB levels are important if you plan to take an English language class, enroll in a bridge training program, look for work or study at a college or university.

Schools

In Canada, children aged six to 16 are legally required to attend school. You can enroll your children in a pre-school or kindergarten program as early as four years of age. Students are enrolled in the elementary school system by birth date. Secondary school students (children aged 14 to 18) are placed in courses appropriate to their learning level.

York Region schools provide positive environments where children can learn, grow, play and develop the skills they need to succeed socially and academically. Schools follow an official curriculum (course work developed by the provincial [Ministry of Education](#)). Please refer to the [Elementary School Guide for Newcomers in Ontario](#) and [Secondary School Guide for Newcomers in Ontario](#) for detailed information about what to expect when your children start school and tips for getting ready.



School Boards

In York Region there are four public school boards. You may choose to enroll your child in any school board, including:

- [York Region District School Board](#) (YRDSB)
- [Conseil Scolaire Viamonde](#) (CSV)
- [York Catholic District School Board](#) (YCDSB)
- [Conseil Scolaire Catholique](#) (CSC)

YRDSB and YCDSB offer publicly funded education for elementary and secondary school students. Elementary schools provide instruction for children from kindergarten to Grade 8, while secondary schools provide instruction from Grades 9 to 12. Both school boards accept students based on postal code (where you live) and offer the opportunity for children to learn the Ontario curriculum in both official languages.

In Ontario, you register your child in a school that services your residential area. To find schools servicing the area where you live, visit the school board's website. When you have found the school that services your residential area and meets your needs, visit your school board's Newcomer Reception Centre website for information about enrolment:

- [YRDSB Newcomer Reception Centre](#)
- [YCDSB Newcomer Reception Centre](#)

French Education

YRDSB and YCDSB offer parents of children entering first grade in September a choice of two 'French as a Second Language' programs: Core French and French Immersion.

- **Core French:** Students receive 40 minutes of French instruction per day in a classroom environment. Students are automatically enrolled in Core French until Grade 9. After Grade 9, French language classes are optional for students
- **French Immersion:** Students receive full-day French instruction in all subjects starting in the first grade at a designated school. You must register your child for French Immersion

CSV and CSC are French-language school boards. They offer publicly funded education for elementary and high school students in Ontario. CSV and CSC schools offer more than a French-immersion environment; students speak French before, during and after class and English is taught as a separate subject at the same skill level as in English-language schools. Information for newcomers may be found at [CSC Newcomer Information](#)



Private Schools

Private schools, for which families pay tuition, are also available in Ontario. All private schools operating in the province are businesses or non-profit organizations. The Ontario Ministry of Education does not financially support, regulate, license, accredit or oversee the operation of private schools in the province. For more information about private education in Ontario, visit the [Ontario Ministry of Education](#) website.

Universities and Colleges

In Canada, universities and colleges are known as post-secondary schools. In Ontario, universities and colleges receive some funding from the [Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities](#), but students must pay for their tuition and the use of school resources.

Financial Aid

The federal and provincial governments in Canada offer funding for post-secondary students who show financial need. [Ontario Student Assistance Program](#) (OSAP) is the main source of financial aid for post-secondary education in Ontario. Students who require financial assistance can also contact the Financial Aid office at their university or college. Many institutions also offer grants, bursaries and scholarships.



Applying for Post-secondary Education

Students typically need a high school diploma to go to college or university in Canada, but each school has its own admission requirements and selects which students to accept.

To apply to an Ontario university, you must submit your application to the [Ontario Universities' Application Centre](#) (OUAC). To apply to an Ontario college, you must submit your application to the [Ontario College Application Service](#) (OCAS).

You will need to apply directly through a post-secondary school only if you are:

- Planning to study part time
- A mature student (generally 21 years of age and away from formal education for some time)
- An international student
- Applying for graduate studies, such as a Masters or Doctoral degree
- Planning to attend adult education classes
- Planning to attend a private career college



Good to know



- The Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities run the education and training system in Ontario. Visit the [Education and training](#) page on the Ontario Government website for more information
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada recognize the [International English Language Testing System \(IELTS\)](#) and the [Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program \(CELP\)](#) as approved English language tests

If you are not a resident of Canada and want to go to school in York Region, you may need a study permit or a visa. You can find how to apply for a study permit on the [Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) website.

Continuing Education

Continuing education courses can help you develop knowledge and skills in a specific subject area. Courses are offered to adults in the community by local school boards, colleges and universities. To learn about university or college programs available to newcomer adults, visit a [Welcome Centre](#) near you.

The Government of Ontario has two programs, the [Global Experience Ontario \(GEO\)](#) and the [Ontario Bridge Training Program](#), to help newcomers get the qualifications they need to practice their profession or trade in Ontario. Refer to their websites for more information about each program.

International Students

As one of Canada's fastest growing communities, York Region attracts many international students from around the globe. International students may come to York Region to attend a post-secondary institution, a secondary school or even an elementary school. Some stay for a short time

and others stay for years to complete a diploma, certificate or degree program.

International students interested in attending a college or university in Ontario should visit the [international student](#) information page of the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities website. International students who already attend a post-secondary institution in Ontario should visit their campus' International Students office to learn more about supports and services that may be available to them. Some support services may include:

- Academic and career support
- Visas and permits
- Health services
- Housing
- Financial aid
- Referrals to other programs and services



7. Working

Finding a job in a new community may be exciting but challenging. York Region is one of the largest business hubs in Greater Toronto and Canada. It is home to two of Greater Toronto's four major business hubs, over 54,000 business establishments, 654,000 jobs and over 500 foreign subsidiaries. York Region is an ideal place to build your life and career.

Social Insurance Number

If you want to work in Canada, open a bank account or access government services and benefits, you will need a [Social Insurance Number](#) (SIN). You can apply for a SIN at your nearest [Service Canada](#) office. Bring all the necessary [documents](#) with you.

Foreign Credentials

Internationally trained and educated workers are in high demand. There are services available to help you get your skills and education recognized in Canada. You may need to upgrade some specific skills or get a licence before you can get a job in your intended profession. The [World Education Services](#) (WES) is designated by [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) (IRCC) to provide [Educational Credential Assessments](#) (ECAs) for degrees and diplomas earned outside of Canada.

A report from WES helps institutions like schools, employers, licensing boards or immigration authorities better understand your educational accomplishments, and can:

- Identify and describe your credentials
- Verify the authenticity of your credentials
- Provide a grade point average (GPA) equivalency
- Evaluate the authenticity of your documents

ECAs can also be used by people who, because of adverse circumstances in their country of education, do not have proof of their academic achievement.

Understanding your Career Pathways

You may be interested in learning about your intended profession or trade in Canada by visiting the [Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials](#) (CICIC) website. In Ontario, the government sets rules and laws for more than 100 professions and trades. Some professions are regulated and some are not. Regulated professions require Canadian licensing or certification even if you have been licensed or certified abroad.



To learn about the university and college programs that can help you work in your intended profession or trade in Ontario, visit a [Welcome Centre](#) near you.

A Welcome Centre representative can help you understand the pathways available to you, including timelines, financial options, credential evaluation, bridge training, internships, mentoring, licensing and alternate career paths. For an appointment call 1-877-761-1155 or email info@welcomecentre.ca

Employment Standards

The [Ontario Ministry of Labour](#) enforces and promotes awareness of [employment standards](#), such as minimum wage, hours of work and public holidays. Please visit the Ministry's website to view the most current employment standards, learn more about employee rights and employer obligations. In addition, the Ministry holds information sessions on the [Employment Standards Act](#) and the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#). Check the [calendar](#) on the Ministry's website for times and locations near you.

To speak to a representative about employment standards, contact the Employment Standards Information Centre:

Greater Toronto Area: 416-326-7160

Canada: 1-800-531-5551

TTY: 1-866-567-8893

To report an incident such as a fatality, critical injury or an unsafe work practice, you may contact the Ontario Ministry of Labour Health and Safety Contact Centre:

Toll-free: 1-877-202-0008

TTY: 1-855-653-9260

Fax: 905-577-1316

Finding a Job

Employers in Canada may recruit employees through professional associations, recruitment agencies, online job search engines, postings in newspapers, trade magazines or websites, at job fairs, conferences or networking events.

To apply for a job in Canada, you need a:

- Social Insurance Number
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Cover letter



Newcomers can also visit a [Welcome Centre](#) for help with their job search, resume writing and interview skills. In addition to offering employment assistance workshops, Welcome Centre staff can answer specific questions. For an appointment, call 1-877-761-1155, visit the Welcome Centre's web page or email info@welcomecentre.ca

The Regional Municipality of York has been recognized as one of Canada's Best Diversity Employers for its commitment to inclusion and celebration of diversity. If you are interested in a job at York Region, please visit the [Careers](#) section of our website and review this [Job Search Handbook](#) and [Resume Toolkit](#).

Filing Income Taxes

In Canada, residents pay taxes to the federal and provincial governments on the income they earn. Many important public programs and services like hospitals, schools, social services and infrastructure are paid through tax dollars. The amount of taxes you pay in Canada will depend on how much you earn. Newcomers to Canada may benefit from the guidance of a tax professional to ensure they understand the process and do not miss out on eligible credits (some individuals and families may be eligible for free services).



Canada Revenue Agency

Income tax is paid to the Government of Canada's [Canada Revenue Agency](#) (CRA). Whether or not taxes are automatically deducted from your paycheck, most taxpayers will need to [file an income tax return](#) with the CRA by April 30 every year (some exceptions apply).

Taxes can be filed electronically or on paper. If it is your first time filing a tax return in Canada, you must file a paper tax return. You can print the income tax and benefit package from the CRA website or contact CRA to receive a copy by mail.

For a list of certified software that can be used to file your taxes electronically, please visit Revenue Canada's [NETFILE](#) website. Some products are free and most will guide you with step-by-step instructions.

For more information about filing an income tax return or checking the status of your tax return, please visit the [Income Tax](#) section of the Government of Canada website.



Good to know



- [Employment Ontario](#) can help you get training, build skills or find a job. Employment Ontario also helps employers train their staff and find the talent they need
- The [Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade](#) website has information about apprenticeships for skilled trades
- Many local trade unions offer skills training. Visit the [Toronto Community Benefits Network](#) website to find local trade unions in your industry of choice
- Volunteering is a great way to meet other people, learn about the community, practice your language skills and gain some Canadian work experience. Follow @VolunteerYR on Twitter or visit [VolunteerYorkRegion.ca](#)
- Professional Immigrant Network (PIN) associations can support you in your job search. They are run by skilled immigrants and often have events that are open to non-members. The [Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council](#) (TRIEC) PIN page offers a list of professional associations that can connect you to resources and supports to help you in your career
- A specialized mentor in your field can help to ease the transition into your profession by offering hands-on advice and job search support. Visit [TRIEC Mentoring Partnership](#) to find a mentor who can help you further your career in Canada

- An internship can help you gain Canadian work experience. Some companies post internships on their job career pages, while other opportunities can be found by searching online. Most internships are short-term and not all employers offer paid placements. Visit [Career Edge](#) to find out about paid internships along with some helpful tips on starting your career in Canada
- If you are starting a small business in York Region visit the [York Small Business Enterprise Centre](#) (YSBEC). You could participate in a one-on-one or group consultation to learn about things like building a business plan, business ownership and registration, licensing and permits and taxation
- Employment Ontario provides information to help you make informed decisions when preparing for an [apprenticeship](#)
- [Ontario Network for Internationally trained Professionals](#) (ONIP) provides information about licensing and employment options in professional fields like accounting, engineering, health care and teaching
- Employment and Social Development Canada issues and renews work permits and reviews labour market options for businesses hiring immigrants and/or foreign workers. Visit the [Employment and Social Development Canada](#) website for more information on workplace standards, the [Temporary Foreign Worker Program](#) and work permits
- The [Workforce Planning Board of York Region](#) conducts local labour market research and provides career planning resources



B. Staying Safe

Keeping residents safe in York Region is important. In an emergency, York Region responds with police, fire and medical services. York Region also prepares residents for the possibility of large-scale emergencies and proactively plans ahead to protect people and property.

Emergencies

Dial 911 any time there is a threat to life or property. This will connect you with police, fire and ambulance dispatch operators. Operators have instant access to an interpreter through Language Line Services, so they can assist with calls in more than 150 languages, 24 hours a day.

Examples of emergencies include:

- Medical emergencies that pose immediate threat to life or bodily injury
- Crimes in progress
- Major property damage or loss
- Fires

When in doubt, call 911 for emergency help.



Police

In Canada, police keep people safe and enforce the law. There are different types of police, including federal, provincial, territorial and municipal. [York Regional Police](#) employs more than 1,500 officers and 600 civilians, and is recognized as a national leader in law enforcement and crime prevention programs.

If the police stop, question or arrest you:

- Be calm
- Do not resist
- Look directly at the officer
- Speak as clearly as possible
- Be ready to show some kind of identification
- Make sure you know why you have been arrested
- Ask to have a lawyer and a translator present (if you need one)
- Do not offer money, gifts or services in exchange for special treatment

If you need to speak with York Regional Police about a non-emergency situation or to report a concern, you may contact the non-emergency line at 1-866-876-5423.





Paramedics



When you dial 911 in a medical emergency, paramedics will be dispatched to help you. [York Region's paramedics](#) are dedicated to providing the highest quality of care to patients. They respond to emergency and non-emergency calls. To find out if there is a cost associated with your call, please visit the [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#) website.

Fire Department

Fire services are provided by each municipality. When you dial 911 in your city or town, the fire department closest to you will be dispatched to respond to your emergency. To find out more about your local fire station or fire and emergency services, visit your city or town's website.

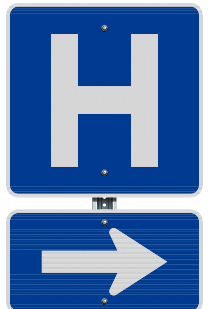
Emergency Social Services

Emergency Social Services (ESS) plans for and coordinates the delivery of services to address immediate and short term needs of residents who have been impacted by an emergency or disaster within York Region. Generally, these short term services are needed to preserve the well-being of residents and to help them get back on their feet. ESS services are most commonly provided in a reception centre - a safe place where people can go to receive food, clothing, shelter and information about the emergency. To learn more, visit the [Emergency Social Services](#) page and the [Regional Municipality of York Emergency Plan](#).

Hospitals

There are world-class hospitals in York Region:

- [Southlake Regional Health Centre](#)
- [Markham-Stouffville Hospital](#)
- [Mackenzie Health Hospital \(Richmond Hill and Cortelluci Vaughan sites\)](#)





9. Having Fun

York Region is a wonderful place to live, work and play. The area is home to a wide range of recreational and cultural venues and activities, historic sites and many other attractions waiting to be explored. Visit [Experience York Region](#), the official website for tourism in York Region, for more information.

Outdoor Activities

York Region is rich in natural heritage areas that offer opportunities for walking, hiking, cycling, and other outdoor activities that are a part of a healthy and active lifestyle. York Region's [conservations areas](#) and [cycling trails](#) offer many different ways to enjoy the outdoors and connect with our natural surroundings.

Dining

York Region has a variety of delicious [restaurants](#). There are also many [wineries and breweries](#) to quench your thirst.

York Region is responsible for inspecting establishments that provide food for public consumption. Persons who regularly handle food can take advantage of the [YorkSafe Food Handler Certificate Program](#). Residents can also learn about food safety at home. Visit York Region's [Food Safety](#) page for more information.

Arts and Culture

York Region is home to renowned [art galleries and museums](#). Whether it's the [McMichael Canadian Art Collection](#), the [Varley Art Gallery](#) or the [Georgina Arts Centre and Gallery](#) – there is plenty for arts and culture lovers to experience.



For exciting festivals and events, the [York Region Festival Trail](#) runs throughout most of the year and features live music, food and lots of family fun.

To see a [live theatre](#) performance, you can visit one of York Region's quality theatres.

Family Fun

York Region has many places for family fun, such as the [Richmond Hill Wave Pool](#), [Canada's Wonderland](#) and the [Recreational Outdoor Campus](#) (ROC).

Your local municipality may also have playgrounds, sports fields, water parks, and natural parks that you can visit free of charge. Visit your [local municipality](#) website for more information.



10. Municipal Government

There are three levels of government in Canada: federal, provincial and municipal.

Municipal governments are based in a city, town, township or district (a municipality). Local or lower tier municipal governments are responsible for areas such as libraries, parks, community water systems, roadways and parking.

York Region

York Region is a two-tier municipality. The Regional Municipality of York delivers specific [services](#) for the lower-tier municipalities: Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

York Regional Council has a Regional Chair and CEO, as well as Regional Councillors from each local municipality. Visit the [Regional Committees and Council](#) page for more information.

Elections

Voting is a basic process that allows individuals to have their say in how our system works. Canadians vote in federal, provincial and municipal elections.

Federal and provincial elections are held every four years. Eligible voters have a few options for how and where to vote. For information on federal elections, please visit the [Elections Canada](#) website. For information on provincial elections, please visit the [Elections Ontario](#) website.

Contact your [local municipality](#) for information related to municipal elections, including voter lists, voting locations and local election accessibility plans.



General Inquiries

For general inquiries, please contact York Region's [Access York](#) contact centre.

Access York

Hours of operation:

Monday to Friday
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Phone: 1-877-464-9675

TTY: 1-866-512-6228
(for deaf and hard of hearing)

accessyork@york.ca

In-Person Service

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, York Region facilities are currently closed to the public.

Mail Inquiries

York Region Administrative Centre
Attention: (Please indicate department, service or contact name)
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1



211 Central

Findhelp Information Services operates 211, which helps residents connect to the complete range of government and community-based health and social services available in their communities.

If you want to talk to someone for information or referrals, dial 211. It is free, confidential and available in up to 170 languages. Calls are answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

211central.ca