

Aurora Public Library hosts first Newcomers Fair ? and all are welcome



If you're new to the community and want to know more about some of the resources available to you here at home, head over to the Aurora Public Library this Monday, October 27, for its inaugural Newcomers Fair.

Hosted throughout the Library (APL), the Newcomers Fair will feature more than 30 organizations offering a range of services from language training, to employment, to housing, to healthcare, education, transit and much more.

The idea behind organizing a Newcomers Fair is to bring together local organizations, service providers, and other community groups that serve newcomers to Canada, Aurora, or York Region, and it gives them the opportunity to discover free resources and supports, says APL's Claudia Olguin, who is organizing the event with colleague Karen Ho.

We have invited over 30 organizations and they all serve newcomers and other members of the community. The idea is that since public libraries play a vital role in helping newcomers and other community members in their settlement journeys, so what better place to bring all these organizations together than Aurora Public Library??

The APL has had a long-standing relationship with many of the participating community partners. They're often invited to showcase their services in the APL space, but this is the first time so many of them will come together under one roof.

It's an indication of how important the APL's role as a community hub has become over the years.

A lot of newcomers when they first visit the library are just so surprised at what we have, so it makes sense to bring everybody here and have this be their launch pad, says Ho. It's not just for people who are new to Canada; it's for anybody new to Aurora, to York Region, and we're open to newcomers in every sense of the word. It's also just for people who are looking to establish a new community in the area.

As I have worked here, it's been very, very rewarding to see people come back again and again, to see the change they have had from the beginning maybe they're a bit timid, maybe they don't know what's offered at a Library, and then, you can see them gain more confidence, they know what's here, they check out more stuff, they bring their friends, they meet new friends at our programs, and it's very rewarding to see that.

Adds Olguin: I've been working at the Aurora Public Library for nine years and have been able to see how this community is changing. It's embracing more newcomers to Canada and when someone is new to a country, they need support in all areas of their life, from employment, to language, and health supports as well.

?I do feel in especially welcoming newcomers to Canada there needs to be awareness about the role that public libraries play in general because people usually think libraries are just for people who enjoy reading, but they don't realize that we offer more than just books; we're a community hub where people can learn, connect, and grow. Hosting this Newcomers Fair is one way APL helps these residents feel welcome, be a part of the community, create those connections, and learn something new.?

For a full ? and expanding ? list of participants, tinyurl.com/APLNEWCOMERS.

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