

Youth Gang Prevention Fund Renewed

STAFF REPORTER

Surrey, British Columbia

With youth gangs an increasing concern across the country, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the renewal of the Youth Gang Prevention Fund to support communities and families across Canada. The Prime Minister was joined by Stockwell Day, President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway.

“Supporting families and communities is a key pillar of the Next Phase of Canada’s Economic Action Plan,” said Harper.

“That is why I am pleased to announce that our Government is renewing the Youth Gang Prevention Fund to support families and communities by rescuing kids from crime and gangs before they wind up in the justice system.”

Between 2000 and 2008, the number of homicides attributed to gangs doubled, from one in eight to one in four.

The Youth Gang Prevention Fund will help to reduce youth gang activity and youth violence by investing in community-based prevention programs in communities across Canada that target at-risk youth.

These programs will provide educational and



Prime Minister Stephen Harper shakes hands with Tanbir Uppal, a graduate of the Wraparound Surrey program, after renewing support for the Youth Gang Prevention Fund. Picture by Jason Ransom

cultural opportunities for at-risk youth, such as enhanced conflict resolution and problem solving skills, as alternatives to gang involvement; positive alternatives to gang involvement through paid, part-time work opportunities and vocational training; homework

and school support; opportunities to socialize and participate in recreational activities; and intensive and individualized mentorship to help at-risk youth make positive lifestyle choices, and to care for children with serious emotional, behavioural, and mental health

needs and their families.

“Our government will continue to take action to protect young people against the lure of crime and gangs,” said the Prime Minister. “We will continue to crack down on serious violent crime. And we will continue to support the rights of law-abiding citizens.”

The government is providing \$37.5 million over five years and \$7.5 million thereafter in ongoing annual support to renew the Fund, supporting grass roots-level programs. Created in January 2007, the fund has supported 19 youth crime prevention programs and initiatives across Canada to date.

According to a press release issued by the Prime Minister’s Office, these projects have reached over 1,400 at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 24, and have shown early success in reducing risk factors related to criminality such as substance abuse, violent behaviour and negative and anti-social attitudes. Participants have also shown improved social skills and a significant increased attachment to teachers and other positive role models, as well as employers and work colleagues.

Work will continue with various partners and stakeholders including the provinces and territories, community groups, police and service providers involved in local projects.

Top performers recognized for leveraging skilled immigrant talent

RENU MEHTA

Toronto

Niranjan Brahmhatt arrived in Canada in June 2009 with 20 years of international experience in project and IT management, marketing and an MBA in Pharmacy. He couldn’t find work until he was hired at a recruitment event hosted by American Express Canada. Nancy Steele, Director, American Express Technologies, spearheaded the skilled immigrant strategy at AMEX, resulting in these recruitment events. In the last two years, 11 skilled immigrants have been hired in the Technologies department which is 10 per cent of all hires in the department.

Yezdi Pavri, originally from India, is now Vice Chairman at Deloitte and is the firm’s long time diversity champion. He has helped institutionalize the onboarding and integration practices for which the company is being recognized.

Brahmhatt and Pavri are part of three organizations and one individual who were amongst a number of Canadians listed as the top performers at the 5th Annual Immigrant Success (IS) awards announced by the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC).

“Over five years we’ve seen a notable uptake and sophistication of recruitment and retention strategies. Employers are now realizing the benefits of a more diverse, globally-aware and connected workforce. IS Award winners are real examples of the benefits that can come from mobilizing the best and brightest in our city,” says Elizabeth McIsaac, executive director of TRIEC.



TRIEC’s 5th Annual IS Award winners. Back row, left to right: Michael Mackenzie, COO, Thales, Canada, Transportation; Zabeen Hirji, Chief Human Resources Officer, RBC; Elizabeth McIsaac, Executive Director, TRIEC; and Yezdi Pavri, Vice Chairman, Deloitte. Seated, left to right: Nancy Steele, Director, American Express Canada; and Catherine Parsonage, Executive Director, Toronto Foundation for Student Success. Photo credit: Camilla Pucholt Photography

TRIEC along with RBC recognized exemplary practice in integrating skilled immigrants in the Toronto Region and celebrated the winners on March 10 at an exclusive reception. The event emceed by Matt Galloway, CBC’s Host for Metro Morning, honoured the winners for their innovative and leading practices that work to engage skilled immigrants in the workforce.

“The more employers tap the full range of capabilities of our workforce to innovate and adapt, develop new markets and foster new relationships, the more competitive

Canada will be in the global economy and the more prosperous we will be at home,” says Zabin Hirji, chief human resources officer at RBC, also the chief sponsor of TRIEC IS awards.

According to statistics, 50 per cent of Toronto’s population was born outside of Canada and immigrant integration matters to Toronto. “Immigrants bring high levels of postsecondary education and training and can open doors to global markets and trade. International and diverse work experience can trigger innovative products and solutions.”

WINNERS

TORONTO FOUNDATION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS (TFSS)

CBC Toronto Vision Award for Immigrant Inclusion

Internationally trained doctors – not yet practising medicine here in Canada – are employed to provide vision and hearing screening in priority neighbourhoods. Immigrant doctors gain Canadian experience while supporting largely newcomer populations with essential and culturally-sensitive healthcare service in their native languages. The program is built on a network of partnerships with the Toronto District School Board, Skills for Change, Sprott Asset Management, and receives over \$500,000 in donations from Walmart Vision Centres annually.

THALES CANADA, TRANSPORTATION

RBC Immigrant Advantage Award

With 90 per cent of its business in the global marketplace, Thales systematically targets and cultivates internationally-trained professionals to ensure its position as a leader in transportation systems worldwide. The company stands apart for its 95 per cent retention rate of skilled immigrants whose efforts are integral to securing and servicing international business contracts.

DELOITTE

Toronto Star Award for Excellence in Workplace Integration

This global financial consulting firm understands that leveraging immigrant talent goes far beyond just recruitment. Beginning on day one of employment, Deloitte administers a comprehensive suite of supportive programs to connect newcomers to colleagues and professional development opportunities.

NANCY STEELE, DIRECTOR, AMERICAN EXPRESS

TECHNOLOGIES, AMERICAN EXPRESS CANADA

Canadian HR Reporter Individual Achievement Award

Nancy Steele knew that her success was directly linked to her ability to draw the right talent to her department. While HR did not fall within her mandate, Nancy quickly became known for piloting a skilled immigrant recruitment and retention strategy in her organization. Nancy’s efforts have resulted in an unprecedented 11 hires in approximately two years and first-ever cross-cultural training for new hires and managers.

