



You're Invited! Community Conversations to define Welcoming Community for Stratford are happening in January and February

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stratford, Ontario, January 10, 2023 – An organizing group, representing the City of Stratford, the Stratford Festival, the Downtown Stratford BIA, the Stratford Public Library, InvestStratford, United Way Perth-Huron, the Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce, Stratford-Perth Pride and Destination Stratford, are pleased to invite you to participate in virtual community conversations happening in January and February 2023 for a process to create a local Welcoming Community Statement.

In response to several incidents of racism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and more instances of harm that our fellow citizens and visitors have experienced over the last year, community members have come together to recognize the responsibility we each have to create a community and culture in Stratford that prioritizes the wellbeing (dignity, safety and belonging) of each of us.

Some community members have already been engaged in internal equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and capacity-building, with an intention to start the work of building internal cultures that are more inclusive, equitable and accessible. At the same time, they've come together and are inviting all community members to find their place in this work to build a culture and community in Stratford that is truly welcoming to, and safe for, all people.

Our aim with this project is to collaboratively define what it means to be a "welcoming community" and to bring this definition to Stratford City Council for formal recognition to continue EDIAR (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism) awareness and action within our community.

Community Conversation Goals

The overall goals of this process are to:

- Meaningfully engage with a diverse group of local citizens and community members, in a way that is inclusive, equitable and accessible, for the purpose of collectively defining “welcoming community” for Stratford.
- Build a draft definition of “welcoming community” based on the input that is received and present this definition to Stratford City Council for formal recognition of Stratford’s vision of being a “welcoming community” using this collaboratively developed, living and evolving definition.
- Reach out to the local workforce and community stakeholders, especially businesses with public-facing staff and those in the manufacturing sector, to work towards the aspirational goal of being a truly welcoming community with everyone drawing from the collective definition.

Community Conversation Information

There are four virtual community conversation sessions being held on Zoom, with each session offering separate breakout room spaces for community members to participate from their experience of an aspect of their identity. We bring this group design to this process to prioritize safe sharing and participation. The dates and times available are Monday, January 23, 2023, at Noon, Saturday, January 28, 2023, at 10:00 A.M., Tuesday, January 31, 2023 at 4:00 P.M. and Wednesday, February 1, 2023 at 6:00 P.M.

You will be invited to share any of your accessibility needs to support your participation during the registration process.

Community Survey Option

If you can participate in the form of a survey and not for a virtual session, the same core questions are available to be answered on the Engage Stratford platform at engagestratford.ca/welcoming-community.

Feel free to share the information about this process in your communities and networks.

Visit VisitStratford.ca/Welcoming-Community for more details and to sign up for a session. Questions may also be directed to 519-271-5140.

###

For more information, please email hello@visitstratford.ca.