

**Office of the Regional Chair and CEO
The Regional Municipality of Durham**



Statement

from the Regional Chair

January 18, 2015

World Religion Day

Whitby, Ontario – Region of Durham Celebrates World Religion Day

On behalf of Durham Regional Council, I extend greetings to everyone participating in the 2015 World Religion Day. Through exhibits and demonstrations of music, spirituality, cultural foods and arts, we call attention to the essential “oneness” of the world’s religions and celebrate the evolution of faith.

We are living in a time and place where we have unprecedented access to the world. With one click, we can read international commentaries, books and ideas. We can engage with religious scholars on Twitter, if we so choose. Through media broadcasts and videos streaming in from around the globe, we are keenly aware of individuals from all walks of life dying for their values. Sometimes we take for granted the freedom to celebrate our religious and cultural traditions without fear. We are thankful to be here together, in this public place, to welcome each other, to learn, and to encourage interfaith understanding. There is no substitute for a personal experience to improve our appreciation of the diverse people, cultures and religions in Durham. That’s what today’s program is all about.

Our faith organizations are vital partners in the Region’s goal to build a safe, healthy, caring and inclusive community in our Region. We truly value your partnership in delivering education programs and social services to support people in our community who may be struggling.

Here at the Region, we are working to build a culture of inclusion through education and communication. Over the past few years, Durham Region staff members have joined officers from the Durham Region Police Service and representatives of the Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council on the Places of Worship tour. The tour has included a Christian multi-

denominational presentation, as well as tours of Muslim, Hindu and Jewish places of worship. Each year, participants come away with a deeper understanding of some of the different faith groups in our community. The day has been so successful in that we have been able to extend invitations to other municipalities and partners. Preparations are underway for a Places of Worship tour this spring.

According to Statistics Canada, about 85% of Durham residents state that they are affiliated with a religious group. That's about half a million people. Think of the power there to address problems and to create a compassionate community where every individual feels valued and their differences respected.

By increasing our understanding of different faiths we build our knowledge, and in that knowledge we find the strength to create a better world. The challenge for all of us is to go beyond ourselves and work together to see that what we have in common is far more important than what sets us apart. Today is a great step in that direction and the Region is pleased to be with you on the journey.

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