

# Markham parenting hub for new and immigrant parents opens

**Sunny Bains**  
*NEWS REPORTER*

A new not-for-profit parenting community hub was launched in Markham on Oct. 21 to offer expert advice and practical resources to new and immigrant parents.

According to founder of ParentConnect, Loretta Lam, York Region has seen a tremendous population growth in recent years.

“Our mission is to promote positive parenting to help parents raise happy and healthy children,” Lam said.

Census 2016 suggested that more than 30 per cent of York Region’s 1.1 million population were immigrants. This number will grow because the GTA is the most popular immigration destination in the country.

ParentConnect staged its first community event - Parenting Expo 2017 - to give a preview of what the parenting hub can offer.

The organizers expected a few thousand visitors over two days. IKEA North York, The Remington Group and TD Wealth were its major corporate sponsors.

Janet McGowan, store manager of IKEA North York, enlightened parents about the furniture company’s philosophy on good parenting.

“Actually, at IKEA, we believe that children are the most important people in the world, and if we raise them right, imagine what the world could become, so it was really easy for us to get involved,” McGowan said.

She said it was important for IKEA to be involved with its communities because within the company’s worker base, over 60 per cent were from visible minorities.

The event featured around 40 exhibitors from public and private

sectors showcasing their services and products. The event also had discussions from 20 experts and interactive knowledge sessions in English, Cantonese and Mandarin languages.

Specialists in areas such as child psychology, mother and baby nutrition, children’s health and wellness, home security and safety, car seat clinic and infant CPR, pre-03 school and after-school programs, youth financial literacy, Chinese medicine,

etc., gave handy advice to parents at the Expo.

Const. Imtiaz Manjra was representing York Regional Police and giving parents tips on child safety.

“We are here today at the Parent Expo to speak about the safety for the children and also to provide safety tips to the parents when it comes to online safety, traffic safety, bike safety and also home safety when kids are left alone at home or in a vehicle,” Manjra said.

Among the supporters of the new parenting hub were Mayor of Markham, Frank Scarpitti, and his councillors Nirmala Armstrong, Don Hamilton and Alan Ho.

Mayor Scarpitti, the guest of honour at the Expo, called the event, “The first of its kind in Canada and the ultimate destination for parents, caregivers and children.”

Also attending as guests of honour were members of Parliament for Markham-Unionville Bob Saroya and Markham-Thornhill Mary Ng.

“We are here because this location is our riding, but more importantly we are here to support the people in the community and organizers who’ve put together this resource and information platform for parents, particularly new immigrant parents,” Ng said.

Parents can join the online community absolutely free to receive news and educational resources all under one roof at [ParentConnect.ca](http://ParentConnect.ca). Public and private sector service and product providers will be invited as partners to provide information, activities, samples, and discount programs.



SUNNY BAINS

A new parenting hub was launched for new and immigrant parents this weekend in Markham. (From right to left) Members of Parliament Bob Saroya and Mary Ng, ParentConnect Founder Loretta Lam, IKEA North York Manager Janet McGowan and TD Wealth Catherine Kong.