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## Immigration-research centres axed

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NICHOLAS KEUNG/torstar news service

**York University Prof. Valerie Preston** is a director of the Ontario Metropolis Centre, part of a research network on immigration settlement slated to be closed next year.

Ottawa plans to stop funding a research network whose findings have helped improve Canada's immigration policies and settlement programs, the Toronto Star has learned.

The federal government will not renew its \$9-million, five-year funding to the five Metropolis research centres in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton and Halifax when the grant runs out in 2013.

Critics say the cut is another blow to researchers and community groups who have already lost the reliable data gleaned from the mandatory long-form census, which the Conservatives ended in 2010.

“If you want to make policies based on opinions instead of what the facts are, you get rid of the facts,” said John Campey of Social Planning Toronto, which founded the Ontario centre along with United Way Toronto and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, in partnership with three Toronto universities.

Campey believes the federal government is taking steps “to undermine the ability of the government and community to argue a case based on facts, which is truly frightening.”

The federal government initiated the Metropolis network in response to rapid demographic change that left policy-makers out of touch with emerging needs and trends among immigrants.

Its research shed light on many migrant issues and contributed to knowledge about the experiences and contributions of newcomers in all spheres of life, said **York University professor Valerie Preston, a director of the Ontario group.**

For example, one focus has been on how well immigrants integrate into Canada’s labour market — which brought the issue of recognition of foreign credentials and the engagement of Canadian employers to the forefront.

In response, English-language classes shifted gears to offer more profession-specific language training, and “career bridging” programs were developed to help newcomers get Canadian work experience through job placements.

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