

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 16, 2024

WARD(S): ALL

**TITLE: REIMAGINING BLACK FUTURES IN VAUGHAN: 2024-2031
ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM ACTION PLAN**

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

This report seeks Council's approval of the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, which outlines the City's strategic approach, action plan and key measures addressing barriers to the full and meaningful participation of the Black community in services, programs, events and general city life.

Report Highlights

- The Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan was developed in consultation with diverse Black communities in the City, the Special Advisory Committee and relevant stakeholders using online surveys, in-person and online focus groups.
- The Action Plan spans 8 years or two terms of Council, containing 3 pillars aligning with the Term of Council Strategic Priorities with approximately 25 Objectives, 58 Key Action items and accountability measures.
- The Action Plan takes a universal approach to addressing anti-Black racism, with 31% of key activities that address broad systemic inequities. The remaining 69% are highly adaptable and can be used to achieve similar outcomes with different communities (i.e., accessibility, newcomers, Indigenous, etc.).

Recommendations

1. That the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan be approved for implementation; and
2. That staff be directed to monitor and measure progress and provide annual updates to Council via the annual updates on the overall Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan.

Background

Anti-Black racism is historic, pervasive, and systemic in Canada. It is both visible and invisible. It is entrenched into societal practices that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization here in Canada. Anti-Black racism is micro (as seen in day-to-day interactions) and structural (as seen in laws and policies). While racism negatively impacts all racialized people, disparities between Black people and other marginalized groups clearly show that Black people continue to be more profoundly impacted by racism.

Through the development of Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (Action Plan), the City is committed to identifying and addressing barriers to the full and meaningful participation of the Black community in services, programs, events and general city life. The City, through the procurement process, contracted the Diversity Institute (DI) to conduct community consultations to inform and develop the final strategy, action plan and key measures.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2021 \(Item 16, Report No. 29 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of April 26, 2022 \(Item 1, Report No. 16 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

[Extract from Council Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2023 \(Item 9, Report No. 48 of the Committee of the Whole\)](#)

Community Engagement

Community Consultation: Survey

The Diversity Institute (DI), in collaboration with the City, developed a survey focused on the following sections:

- Experiences with anti-Black racism in the City: to understand perceptions and experiences of anti-Black racism, as well as senses of belonging and allyship.

- Experiences with City events and services: to understand experiences accessing and using City services, as well as to understand participation in City events and the needs of Black entrepreneurs and Black business owners in the City.
- Experiences communicating and engaging with the City: to understand experiences receiving City information, channels used, and opportunities for improvement. Further, to understand perceptions of engagement – whether diverse Black communities believe that the City seeks their input and feedback on initiatives.
- Open-ended questions: embedded throughout sections to provide diverse Black communities with an opportunity to share recommendations for change related to services, events, communications, and others. The survey also included open-ended questions at the end of the survey geared towards understanding what the City does well broadly and what can be improved.

The survey collected demographic information including racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, Indigenous identity, whether participants are living with a disability, information on citizenship and newcomer status, age, religion, and languages spoken. This accounts for intersectionality, and where possible, DI will disaggregate findings to understand specific experiences and needs across diverse Black communities.

Community Consultations: Focus Groups

DI held a series of community conversations in 2023 with individuals from diverse Black communities in the City to understand current experiences and barriers to participation in City initiatives, as well as their recommendations for change. Sessions were held both virtually and in person to provide flexibility and consideration for individuals with different needs.

- March 12: General experiences of Black individuals
- March 14: Experiences of Black Immigrant individuals
- March 15: Experiences of Black Seniors
- March 27: Experiences of Black Youth
- March 28: Experiences of Black members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- March 29: General experiences of Black individuals
- March 30: Experiences of Black Business Owners
- April 12: General Session
- April 20: Youth in-person session
- April 25: Adult in-person session

Session planning centred around the following efforts:

- **Intentional engagement and outreach:** In Phase 1 and Phase 2, DI intentionally and proactively reached out to organizations supporting diverse Black communities, as well as individuals part of the Black community, to share project efforts and objectives, and to encourage individuals to participate.
- **Widespread, accessible, and intersectional participation:** DI mitigated and addressed barriers to participation in engagement activities for diverse Black communities, including planning around other City events, providing virtual and in-person sessions, considering religious holidays and practices, and others. DI further ensured that sessions considered the intersectional experiences of the Black population and held sessions specific for Black immigrants, Black youth, Black seniors, Black members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and Black business owners.
- **Respectful and solutions-oriented dialogues:** DI created safe and welcoming spaces for Black individuals to share stories, barriers, and experiences of anti-Black racism while focusing conversations on solutions and recommendations for change. This was fostered through pre-session communications on session expectations and goals, mindful facilitation tactics, and trauma counsellor support.

Participation

- Consultations/focus groups/1-1 meetings: across both virtual and in-person sessions from Phases 1 & 2, 81 individuals participated.
- Survey: 108 individuals completed the survey, and 83 of them were Black.
- A total of 81 unique individuals attended the sessions in Phases 1 and 2, which were held either virtually or in person. This figure excludes any repeat attendances within the same session and the presence of DI individuals. However, it does include people who attended multiple different sessions, such as someone who participated in both a virtual and an in-person session.

City Department Meetings

DI engaged with City departments to share information about the project, understand departmental responsibilities and activities, and seek staff and leadership perspectives on how they envision their department's work supporting diverse Black communities.

Following the drafting of the Action Plan, the DI re-engaged the various City departments to ensure the drafted recommendations aligned with the City's various responsibilities, plans, etc. This internal City review involved feedback from 14 departments to ensure that City staff remained informed and engaged, and the appropriate department had been engaged. This feedback was used to further revise the plan ahead of the public feedback campaign in a manner that ensures the City

remains committed to eliminating the biases and barriers that impact diverse Black communities.

Public Validation Workshops

DI held a series of virtual and in-person workshops in 2023 to present the draft Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan and ensure the community had an opportunity to comment on the plan components. In conversation with community leaders, diverse Black communities, and individuals who had previously engaged in the survey and prior consultations, DI hosted several collaborative workshops to share the draft plan and receive feedback:

- Sept 13: In person at the Civic Centre Resource Library with the public
- Sept 14: Virtual over Microsoft Teams with the SAC
- Sept 18: Virtual over Zoom with the public

Special Advisory Committee

Throughout the process, DI engaged and collaborated with the Special Advisory Committee (SAC) to share progress, findings, and the draft Action Plan for their review and feedback. In addition to the virtual validation workshop, the SAC was given additional opportunities to provide written feedback on the plan. The SAC was also provided space in the plan to include a message, ensuring their perspectives are integrated into the final plan.

Analysis and Options

The City of Vaughan's commitment to addressing anti-Black racism is reflected in our comprehensive action plan, which has been shaped through extensive community consultations. These consultations revealed the diverse experiences and feedback of Black communities within Vaughan, underlining the critical need for an action plan that not only addresses anti-Black racism but also fosters meaningful connections between the City and its Black residents. This plan aims to continuously engage the community, providing pathways to build stronger, collaborative relationships that enable full and meaningful participation in the City's civic, cultural, and economic life.

The action plan is extensive, reflecting the depth and breadth of the issues at hand, as well as the City's commitment to long-term, sustainable change. The Action Plan takes a universal approach to addressing anti-Black racism, with 31% of key activities that address broad systemic inequities. The remaining 69% are highly adaptable and can be used to achieve similar outcomes with different communities (i.e., accessibility, newcomers, Indigenous, etc.). It spans across two council terms, approximately from 2024 to 2031, allowing sufficient time for the development and implementation of a detailed plan. This timeline ensures that the City can align the action items with

departmental capabilities, staff, and budget resources, while also accommodating necessary adjustments over time.

Benefits:

- **Enhanced Community Engagement:** By incorporating feedback and experiences directly from the Black communities in Vaughan, the action plan ensures that initiatives are grounded in real needs and perspectives, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance.
- **Strengthened Relationships:** The plan emphasizes building collaborative relationships between the City and Black communities, fostering trust and mutual respect, which are foundational for meaningful participation and inclusion.
- **Strategic Alignment:** The involvement of Senior Leadership Leaders and all departments ensures that the action plan is fully integrated into the City's broader strategic objectives, enhancing cohesion and impact across initiatives.

Risks:

- **Implementation Challenges:** Given the extensive scope of the plan, there may be challenges in aligning departmental capabilities and resources along with competing priorities with the planned initiatives, requiring ongoing adjustments and flexibility.
- **Community Engagement:** Sustaining long-term engagement with the community may present challenges, necessitating innovative approaches to keep stakeholders involved and informed throughout the implementation phase.

Financial Impact

Through careful planning, budgetary considerations, and business case reviews, the plan will work toward ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to support its objectives.

Operational Impact

In developing the action plan, DI and the City's DEI team collaborated closely with key internal departments and leaders to secure buy-in and ensure the plan's actions were both relevant and feasible. This foundational work ensures organizational support and a clear understanding of departmental roles in advancing the plan's goals.

Upon approval of the Action Plan, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team will lead the development of the implementation plan, working with all City departments to ensure appropriate timelines for execution. This phase will involve providing support and working collaboratively with relevant stakeholder departments to identify necessary staff and budget resources to support the implementation of the Action Plan through the City's Business Case Review process.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The action plan thoughtfully includes key items that extend support to the broader initiatives of York Region, addressing areas like immigration and settlement that are beyond the City's jurisdiction. By aligning certain aspects of our strategy with regional efforts, we aim to foster a collaborative approach to systemic change across the region. This alignment ensures that our action plan contributes to a unified regional effort, leveraging our collective resources and influence to address anti-Black racism more effectively.

Conclusion

In summary, the approval and implementation of the Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024 – 2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan, a comprehensive strategy designed to address anti-Black racism within our community, is recommended. To ensure the plan's effectiveness and its alignment with our long-term goals, we also recommend that staff be tasked with monitoring progress and delivering annual updates to Council as part of the broader Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan. Together, these steps represent a committed, structured approach to combating anti-Black racism, fostering a more inclusive and equitable community for all.

For more information, please contact: Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

Attachment

1. Reimagining Black Futures in Vaughan: 2024-2031 Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan.

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Approved by



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