

City of Vaughan Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Findings and Recommendations Report



Introduction

The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force—led by Chair, Councillor Tony Carella and Vice-chair, Councillor Alan Shefman—was convened in October 2020 by Council Resolution. The task force’s goal was to guide the City of Vaughan in developing policies that promote fairness, mutual respect and an undoubted sense of inclusion among the diverse individuals, communities and stakeholder groups that compose its **citizenry**. The task force was to submit **no later than June 2022** its recommendations to Council on delivering equitable programs and services that reflect its residents' diverse needs and the community's **own** diversity as reflected in municipal hiring and tendering practices.

The task force **met** regularly to review current policies, practices, inclusion-related documents and best practices from other sectors and communities. **It also** provided input towards improving the inclusion of all ethnocultural, national, racial and religious groups among residents, businesses and other stakeholders. The task force also reviewed the **City of Vaughan’s** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and the Multi-Year Action Plan. In providing feedback, the task force has stressed the importance of centring the voices and **lived** experiences of Indigenous and equity-deserving communities through targeted engagement strategies to reflect their voices in the City’s programs and services.

The City of Vaughan is immeasurably enriched by the many people from all walks of life that make up this unique and beautiful community. Though we all contribute to the city’s economic, social and cultural fabric, we acknowledge that some continue to experience unfair treatment, are denied opportunities and are excluded based on identity and social location. We remember the wise words of Dr. Martin Luther King that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere; therefore, the task force joins the City in condemning all forms of violence, hatred and discrimination.

The task force believes that equitable policies, practices and services are integral to fostering and supporting a diverse and inclusive workforce and community. **But we** must be intentional in our efforts to foster inclusion, be mindful of unintentionally reproducing and reinforcing inequities, and hold ourselves accountable to the future, to our children and their children.

The Diversity and Inclusion Task Force believe that its recommendations, as detailed here, along with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan currently under development, are but two of the many steps we need take in the short and medium term to foster an inclusive, equitable and accessible community for all. The task force is proud to endorse the City’s earnest commitment to meaningful and sustainable change. We ask all **citizens** of Vaughan to join us in this journey to a community where everyone is celebrated, welcomed and supported.

Applying a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lens

To achieve the vision embodied in the recommendations of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, the City of Vaughan must apply a *diversity lens* to all its initiatives and operations. Further, diversity considerations must be embedded in its by-laws, policies and practices, **now and into the future**. Implementation of this recommendation will only materialize if it is:

- deemed a priority by Council
- carried out by senior management and staff who have received diversity training
- replete with accountability measures to ensure continuous evaluation and improvement.
- based on best diversity and cultural practices in the private and senior government sectors

Employee Recruitment

<i>ER1</i>	Ensure diverse representation in the hiring/decision-making process.
<i>ER2</i>	“Blind recruiting”---which means the names of interviewees are redacted in an attempt to preserve the process from bias---needs to be further examined and revised, as it does not address other forms of racial bias in hiring which may come into play if the interviewer has details of the candidates country of origin, where they received their education or where their experience was gained.
<i>ER3</i>	Borrowing from successful private sector processes, the City of Vaughan should collect race-based data, to determine whether staff reflect the demographics of the City of Vaughan.
<i>ER4</i>	Employment opportunities should be advertised in ethnic print and electronic venues, as well as alternative sites such as Charity Village, LinkedIn.
<i>ER5</i>	Employment interviews should be conducted through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens, with no favouritism shown to particular communities over others.
<i>ER6</i>	A mechanism must be put in place to ensure that all applicants are presented to any hiring committee without pre-screening by administrative staff.
<i>ER7</i>	Barriers to certain specific groups must be reduced by borrowing from best private sector practices (e.g., BMO, KPMG) in targeting certain communities (e.g., Indigenous persons, persons with disabilities) when recruiting for specific positions.
<i>ER8</i>	Connections must be fostered with community agencies to conduct interviews and job-ready workshops for potential candidates (a practice employed by BMO, Lime Connect, JVS, March of Dimes, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, etc.).
<i>ER9</i>	Conduct recruiting at university and college campuses, by participating in/hosting in-school networking/recruiting events or by sponsoring such events in order to attract young people to work for the city.
<i>ER10</i>	Create a hiring policy such that a recruiting panel cannot value "Canadian experience" and "Canadian education" more favourably than foreign education and experience, a practice that penalizes new immigrants who make up a sizeable portion of the annual increase in Vaughan's population.

Employee Retention and Development

<i>RD1</i>	In order that the staff of the City reflect the citizens of the City, set goals to achieve a certain percentage representation of Visible Minorities and Females in senior management positions (i.e., City Manager, Deputy City Managers, Directors, Managers) by 2030, to be achieved by building a talent pipeline to these roles, including mentoring of and advocacy for promising candidates.
<i>RD2</i>	Provide annual refresh training on diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure employees are well-equipped to create an inclusive space for each other and the community at large, with people open and appreciative about differences.
<i>RD3</i>	Conduct a Diverse Workforce Survey and encourage participation by all employees, in order for all to understand workplace demographics, better appreciate their colleagues, better serve their own needs as employees.
<i>RD4</i>	Provide a full range of workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities, by <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addressing visual, hearing, dexterity and learning disabilities with solutions such as large-screen monitors, sound baffles, sound amplification devices, ASL interpreters, closed captioning, note takers, electronic organizers, learning strategists, employment coaches and assistive technology.• Supporting employees with muscular, skeletal and circulatory conditions with ergonomic equipment.• Facilitating communication for employees who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.• Promote access to occupational therapists and other external supports to assess and recommend workplace accommodations for people with non-visible disabilities, such as mental illness.

Procurement and Purchasing

Procurement Policy and Bidding processes need to be intentionally inclusive and committed to creating an awareness of opportunities in diverse communities. Partnerships with community agencies, ethnic media and other advertising channels will go a long way in informing citizens of the opportunities that exist in Vaughan.

Integrating diverse suppliers into City of Vaughan's supply chain is an important way to encourage economic inclusion and promote a culture of fairness. Small and medium businesses are the beating hearts of the city and creating opportunities for new and diverse businesses to grow through partnerships with the city is an important way to meet the diversity objectives for our community.

Diverse suppliers are those that the city can accredit based on being owned, managed and operated by individuals belonging to a diverse group including minorities, women, veterans, the disabled, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Indigenous peoples. The city must commit to building long-term relationships with diverse suppliers and ensuring that qualified companies have equal opportunity to compete for business, and it must expect its suppliers to provide similar opportunities in their own supply bases.

PP1	Conduct an audit (ideally with an external organization) to set a baseline of the active supplier pool.
PP2	Set diversity targets for the city and for each functional area within the municipal government and ensure the procurement leadership is responsible to meet them.
PP3	Require vendors to share information about their diversity practices and make each company's diversity, equity and inclusion policies part of a Request For Proposal (RFP) scoring criteria.
PP4	Consider ensuring there is diversity, equity and inclusion within the City's procurement team or use an external scorer that reflects a diversity mindset.
PP5	Where possible, select individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People Of Colour and/or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer or 2+ Spirited to be appointed on the RFP evaluation committee.
PP6	Review onboarding processes and establish a "fast lane" process to make it easier for city managers to bring on new suppliers who aren't currently in the system if they are part of the diversity program.
PP7	Consider a diversity-based peer mentoring program where current established vendors would be awarded concessions if they agree to act as mentors to new diverse businesses in their industry.

Programs and Services

PS1	Update policies and procedures to ensure customer-facing employees provide exceptional services to customers in need of accessibility accommodations, by understanding the importance and relevance of service animals, support persons, and document formats such as braille and/or accessible fonts.
PS2	Conduct a survey to determine if there is sufficient interest in a sports league open specifically to people with disabilities. If there is, the City should dedicate resources to form such a league, as many existing community service organizations (CSOs) are not able to accommodate individuals with disabilities.
PS3	Groups with a focus on servicing people with disabilities should be added to the "Priority #2" section in the City of Vaughan's Fair Play Facility Allocation Policy, Section 4, Priority Schedule, which section includes children and youth CSOs, heritage village fairs, seniors groups.
PS4	Review the Vaughan's Fair Play Facility Allocation Policy, Section 5, Facility Allocations through a diversity lens---in consideration of (1) smaller CSOs serving equity-seeking groups who may be excluded from prime-time allocations simply because of their limited size; (2) CSOs without past usage records being penalized for lacking such records.
PS5	Provide Vaughan Public Libraries free computer literacy training to under-resourced Vaughan residents.
PS6	Ensure that digital information provided by the City can be accessed on least expensive devices capable of handling such information.
PS7	Ensure that heritage-related celebrations (whether months or days) dedicated to different peoples do not ignore significant groups by pro-active initiatives, if necessary.

PS8	Recreation services need to be marketed in a more “pro-active” manner, to be more inclusive and welcoming of immigrants and newcomers of diverse communities in Vaughan. Many residents from this sector refrain from making use of recreation services offered by the city, because of racial and/or anti-immigrant attitudes and exclusionary practices they often experience at the hands of mainstream residents and other non-visible minority groups. This situation is harmful to this sector of the community and impedes the growth and development of cohesive and active communities in Vaughan.
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General

G1	Allocate additional human resources and operational funds to advance the aforementioned recommendations through an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
G2	Create a permanent committee composed of a minimum of two members of Council and an as-yet-to-be-determined number of citizen-members, to provide ongoing input as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Multi-Year Action Plans are carried out; and to have the committee report to Council annually via the Diversity and Inclusion Officer.
G3	Install a plaque featuring the Territorial Acknowledgement at some prominent location at City Hall and fly the Indigenous flag permanently as well.
G4	Commence a dialogue with representatives of the local Black communities of both African and Caribbean descent regarding the name of the municipality.