

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 5, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: CITY OF VAUGHAN'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
PLAN AND MULTI-YEAR ACTION PLAN

FROM:

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

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

The City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan (DEI Plan) aims foster a city and workplace culture that is inclusive and respectful, where all citizens, employees, businesses, and visitors are provided with accessible opportunities to engage and participate. The DEI Plan and multi-year action plan will build on existing work to progress the goal of an inclusive community and workforce where everyone feels welcome.

Report Highlights

- Shifting demographic requires robust diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to support a diverse workforce and retain top talent.
- Systemic discrimination deeply impacts the communities that the City serves requiring meaningful and sustainable efforts to address social injustice.
- Adopting a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan is a firm step forward in fostering a diverse, inclusive, equitable and safe community for all people by addressing racism, discrimination and inequities.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Council adopt the City of Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan.
2. It is recommended that Council approve the City of Vaughan's Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement.

3. It is recommended that Council approve the Multi-Year Action Plan.

Background

The City of Vaughan is proud to have diverse communities and values the significant contributions they make to the cultural, economic, and social achievements in Vaughan. The City is continuing to grow and diversify. Demographics based on the 2016 Census Data show that both the City and its citizens are diverse. The City continues to forge connections and pursue opportunities that demonstrate a commitment to fostering an inclusive community and truly appreciate the diversity that enriches it.

Milestone Moments

- In 2018, Vaughan Council endorsed the United Nations' proclamation to designate the years 2015 to 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent.
- March 2019, the City of Vaughan became the first municipality in Canada to endorse the Leadership Accord on Gender Diversity.
- June 2019, Council endorsed and adopted the Vaughan Inclusion Charter in support of the Inclusion Charter for York Region, a community initiative to create a fair and equal environment for all.
- October 2019, the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force was established through a Member's Resolution of Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua.
- The City launched Annual Accessibility Champion Awards in 2019.
- The murder of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Brianna Taylor in the United States and the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto in 2020 brings attention to systemic and pervasive anti-Black racism leading to global demonstrations and protests (including demonstrations held in the City of Vaughan).
- Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua issued statements on June 3, 2020 and June 16, 2020 in solidarity against racial injustice.
- Rise of COVID-19 sees a rise in anti-Asian hate and violence.
- July 2020, Council unanimously endorsed Ward 4 City Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco's Member's Resolution that reinforced Council's efforts to "unanimously and vigorously denounce acts of hatred, discrimination and violence directed against people of various Asian origins."
- Summer of 2020, City established the position of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer to provide leadership in fostering diversity, inclusion and accessibility.
- In July 2020 a Member's Resolution was passed by Mayor Bevilacqua and Members of Council proclaiming July 18 Nelson Mandela International Day in Vaughan.

- July 2020 Council supported a Member's Resolution to proclaim January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day in Vaughan as a meaningful way to recognize this formidable individual who was the first Black Canadian to be elected as Member of Parliament in the House of Commons, to be appointed as a Cabinet Minister and, later, as Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario.
- Mayor Bevilacqua and Members of Council unanimously proclaimed August 1 as Emancipation Day in the City of Vaughan during a meeting of Committee of the Whole (2) on June 16, 2020.
- October 2020, the Honourable Jean Augustine, Canada's first female African Canadian Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister, was bestowed with the Key to the City by Mayor Bevilacqua.
- In late 2020 City convened the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force to provide guidance to the City 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 population.
- January 2021, the City's first Diversity and Inclusion Officer is hired and attends meetings of the City's Senior Leadership Team as an advisor on diversity and inclusion matters.
- February 2021, Council endorsed 2019-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Inclusive Design Standards.
- The City lowered flags to half-mast in May and June of 2021 to honour the First Nation, Métis and Inuit children who were uncovered in unmarked graves.
- Canada Day 2021 is marked with flags at half-mast to acknowledge the suffering endured by thousands of First Nation, Métis and Inuit children sent to residential schools as well as their families and communities.
- Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation are marked in September of 2021 in sober reflection of the continued work to advance reconciliation with First Nation, Metis and Inuit communities.

The City recognizes that the impact of systemic, structural and institutional barriers must be addressed for Indigenous and equity-deserving groups to reach their fullest potential and achieve civic engagement.

The City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion mission is to

- Identify and address forms of discrimination that create barriers to equity and inclusion in the workplace
- Identify and address inequities in access to service, community, and civic engagement including
- Implement programs, initiatives and services that recognize the diversity of the City of Vaughan

- Work towards fairness, social justice, and nondiscrimination.

Previous Reports/Authority

Hyperlink most relevant reports, websites and/or direction on this topic.

Analysis and Options

Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

Workplace demographics are shifting. Gen X is planning for retirement and Boomers are actively retiring. Older Millennials are shifting into senior management and executive roles as younger Millennials and Gen Z are shifting the traditional relationship between employers and employees. The shift can be best explained as the difference between ‘why should I work for you?’ and ‘why do you want to work for us?’. Contrary to popular beliefs, younger talent is deeply invested in their work and knows their time and effort have real meaning. They have grown up in a global community that is far more diverse than previous generations. They recognize that diversity and inclusion are critical to an innovative workplace and are actively looking to see how these values are modelled and implemented. Top talent is no longer limited by geography in a global online community. Therefore, a workplace lacking diversity and inclusion is at risk of talent loss in an ever-tight race to hire and retain talent.

Research shows that a diverse workforce is able to think outside the box leading to innovative program development and creative service delivery. Current research around workforce diversity highlights the following benefits:

- Better able to attract high-performing talent
- Increased customer service satisfaction
- Higher employee satisfaction
- Improved decision-making in the organization
- Reduced costs associated with employee turnover

Equitable Workplace

Policies and practices that appear to be neutral at face value often have a negative impact on members of certain groups. Barriers presented by discrimination and the disadvantages faced by equity-deserving groups and vulnerable populations negatively impact hiring talent and retention efforts. For example, unconscious bias and conscious stereotypes, including sexism, ableism, ageism, racism, and homophobia, have proven to impact whether a candidate obtains a job, or an employee is promoted. Longitudinal research shows that systemic and structural barriers mean that it can be difficult for people from Indigenous and equity-seeking groups to be hired and advance in the

workplace. Furthermore, employees who do not feel comfortable and included in their workplaces are more likely to become disengaged, take unnecessary absent days, or leave their jobs, translating to high organizational costs. Lack of inclusion for employees with diverse needs can also lead to “presenteeism,” where employees are physically present but are distracted by unaddressed physical or emotional issues. In 2015, it was estimated that presenteeism and absenteeism contributed to \$6 billion in annual losses in Canada.

Therefore, the City must take robust measures, including diversity, equity and inclusion plans, policies and initiatives to actively promote diversity and inclusion to meet human rights, equity, and social justice standards and critical for attracting, retaining, and engaging employees. The City also recognizes a workforce that leverages the expertise of diverse employees can lead to meaningful and productive relationships with communities.

Social Justice

Systemic barriers that have evolved from historical practices (slavery, residential schools, etc.) continue to exclude members of equity-deserving communities or place them at a disadvantage. The summer of 2020 brought the reality of anti-Black racism to global consciousness and 2021 was a sober reminder of the continued legacy and impact of anti-Indigenous racism. The impact of COVID-19 has been far worse on communities already impacted by systemic discrimination. The sharp rise in anti-Asian racism during the pandemic also illustrated the ease in which hate could be mobilized against racialized communities and the enormous effort it takes to address the resulting violence and trauma collectively. The steady rise in misogyny, anti-Semitism and persistent Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia are examples of the increasing need to work with communities to eradicate all forms of hatred and discrimination. As individuals, organizations, corporations, communities and as a nation, we have must find ways to meaningfully address matters of racial injustice with tangible and sustainable solutions.

A targeted universal approach is necessary to address the vilest forms of racism. Given that all forms of racism can be traced back to and is deeply rooted to colonialism and slavery, in Canada this means addressing anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism. Targeted universalism means setting universal goals pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. Therefore, developing an action plan to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism will be a priority for the City. Action plans will be developed through a facilitated community engagement process to ensure that they are community-centred and City driven.

A targeted universalism also recognizes that while universal goals are established for all groups concerned; unique strategies must be developed based upon how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies to obtain the universal goal. Therefore, addressing anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia through a collaborative approach that responds to the particular needs of these communities remains a priority for the City.

The City of Vaughan recognizes that it carries a responsibility to address all forms of racism and has an invested interest in fostering a diverse, inclusive, equitable and safe community for all people.

Financial Impact

Adoption of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan has no financial implications resulting. The Multi-Year Action Plan includes several Key Priority areas will require both staff and financial resources to implement. Annually, ongoing resources will be required to develop and implement training. Facilitated community engagement activities with equity-deserving communities will also require capital funds as well as operational funds to implement, monitor and control the resulting action plans. Given that the DEI program is still in its early stages at the City, the Diversity and Inclusion Officer will utilize the City's business case process to request the necessary funds on an annual basis. A meaningful and sustained approach requires the necessary funds to achieve the activities listed in the multi-year plan.

Conclusion

Ensuring a workplace and city that is diverse, inclusive and equitable is everyone's responsibility. A diverse municipality needs to be an inclusive place where everyone has a role to play, feels a true sense of belonging, and is included. Along with our collective responsibilities, the various levels within the organization play important roles in supporting, implementing, and championing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan.

The City is committed to fostering, embedding, and sustaining a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion and working together with community to address social justice issues. It is recommended that Council approve the City of Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and accompanying Multi-Year Action Plan.

For more information, please contact:

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Zincia Francis, Diversity & Inclusion Officer.

Attachment

1. City of Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and Multi-Year Action Plan.

Prepared by

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Approved by



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Reviewed by



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