

## Committee of the Whole (1) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, June 1, 2021

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE:** DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN AND  
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

**FROM:**

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

**ACTION:** FOR INFORMATION

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**Purpose**

To advise of the forthcoming Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, which aims to foster an inclusive and respectful culture, where all citizens, employees, businesses, and visitors are provided with accessible opportunities to engage and participate. Staff will initiate a community consultation process to inform the development of part of the larger Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan to address racism, particularly anti-Black racism.

**Report Highlights**

- Diversity is the representation or the make-up of individuals. Inclusion is an organizational effort and practices whereby groups or individuals of diverse backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed. Equity is a process that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities.
- Having a diverse and inclusive workforce in an equitable environment where employees bring different perspectives, backgrounds, skills, experiences and knowledge leads to increase in innovative and creative ideas leading to better service to residents and visitors.
- The forthcoming Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan aims to address how diversity, equity and inclusion can be achieved at the organizational and community levels.
- Community consultations is critical to understanding community stakeholders, the unique needs of diverse communities and ensuring their voices are represented in strategic planning, action planning and policy development.

## **Recommendations**

1. That this report be received for information.

## **Background**

The City places a great deal of importance on diversity, inclusion and the condemnation of racism in all its forms. 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.
- In March 2019, the City of Vaughan became the first municipality in Canada to endorse the Leadership Accord on Gender Diversity.
- In 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.
- In 2019, launched the Annual Accessibility Champion Awards.
- In February 2021, Council endorsed the 2019-2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Inclusive Design Standards.
- The Accessibility and Diversity Coordinator continues to work to advance inclusive and accessible spaces.
- Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua issued statements on June 3, 2020 and June 16, 2020 in solidarity against racial injustice.
- In 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."
- In the summer of 2020, the City established the position of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer to provide leadership in fostering diversity, inclusion and accessibility. The Officer will attend meetings of the City's Senior Leadership Team as an advisor on diversity and inclusion matters.
- In late 2020, the 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.
- A Member's Resolution was also passed by Mayor Bevilacqua and Members of Council proclaiming July 18 Nelson Mandela International Day in Vaughan.

- In October 2019, the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force was established through a Member's Resolution of Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua.
- 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.
- In 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 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.
- The City of Vaughan continues to champion a positive culture of diversity and inclusion through community gatherings such as our Black History Month celebration every February at Vaughan City Hall.

### **Previous Reports/Authority**

N/A

### **Analysis and Options**

#### **Diversity and Inclusion**

The City values the diversity of the people and communities it serves and recognizes and respects human differences and similarities. The commitment to diversity includes all groups protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code. The City recognizes that an individual's needs and experiences may reflect intersecting membership in more than one of those groups. The City also recognizes that inclusion is an active, intentional, and continuous process to address inequities in power and privilege and build a respectful and diverse community that ensures welcoming spaces and opportunities to flourish for all.

The City recognizes the barriers presented by discrimination and the disadvantages faced by equity-seeking groups and vulnerable populations. 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.

Robust measures, including diversity and inclusion policies and strategies, are necessary to actively promote diversity and inclusion to meet human rights, equity, and social justice standards and critical for attracting, retaining, and engaging employees.

### **Benefits of Diverse Workforce**

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<sup>1</sup>:

- 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

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts are complementary to each other. One cannot thrive and flourish without the other. Equity is an approach that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist; therefore, we do not all start from the same place, nor do we have the same access to all opportunities. Equity recognizes that unfair disadvantages and advantages exist and commit to identifying and addressing barriers to reduce disparity. Therefore, while diversity and inclusion can be considered an outcome, equity is not. Equity refers to the process to ensure that equity-seeking groups have the opportunity to grow, contribute, and develop. Achieving equity is only possible if the conditions for diverse and inclusive system exist.

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

The City's longitudinal commitment with respect to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are:

- Identify and address forms of discrimination that create barriers to equity and inclusion in the workplace

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt, V., Layton, D., & Prince, S. (2015, January). Why diversity matters. McKinsey and Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>  
Deloitte. (2017). Outcomes over optics: Building inclusive organizations. <https://www2.deloitte.com/ca/en/pages/press-releases/articles/deloitte-says-canadas-future-prosperity-demands-we-get-inclusion-right-and-we-cant-afford-to-wait.html>

- Identity and address inequities in access to service, community and civic engagement
- Work with Indigenous and equity-seeking groups to counter historical, attitudinal, structural, systemic, and institutional practices that inhibit inclusivity
  - Develop a strategic plan to foster a meaningful relationship with Indigenous communities and advance reconciliation
  - Develop a strategy to address all forms of racism, discrimination, and bigotry, including anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and religious intolerance, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia
  - Embed strategies toward achieving gender parity in management and senior leadership levels
- Implement programs, initiatives and services that recognize the diversity of the City of Vaughan
- Work towards fairness, social justice and nondiscrimination

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

## **Community Input**

Community input is critical to frame and help develop the City's forthcoming Addressing Racism strategy, which is part of the larger Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Community input recognizes that all people are entitled to say in the decisions that affect their lives. It is important that the work to address racism does not inadvertently reinforce existing power imbalances and create inequity. Community input is rooted in the idea that people should have voice in the strategies, policies and action plans that address the issues they face.

## **Community-Centered, City Driven**

Community-led consultations are an effective way to ensure that as many people as possible have meaningful opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas.

## **Benefits of Community Consultations**

- Create a constructive space for a healthy dialogue
- Use an intersectional approach
- Highlight the voices of equity-seeking people and honour their experiences
- Respond to the diverse needs and experiences of equity-seeking communities in Vaughan
- Promote clear communication so that everyone can understand and participate
- Provide opportunities for those who experience extreme marginalization to actively participate

- Encourage sensitive behaviours from those who carry power (institutional and community)
- Allow new voices and new leadership to emerge, including youth leadership

### **Data Collection and Reporting Back**

All feedback from community consultation will be collected and shared with the community once it has been thematically coded and summarized. It is critical to ensure that community voice has been captured appropriately.

### **Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan Development**

A strategy to address anti-Black racism is a critical component of diversity, equity and inclusion. By partnering with residents, community leaders, community organizations, the City can center the voices of Black community members in collaboratively addressing anti-Black racism. Members of diverse Black communities can meaningfully share their ideas on addressing anti-Black racism in partnership with residents and community groups. A strategy to address the racism that centers the expertise of lived experiences can lead to meaningful and productive relationships with communities.

Over the next several months, the City will develop the necessary plans to conduct community consultations. Communications support to engage community will also be critical to successful community consultation process. The community consultation will inform the development of a strategy and action plan to address racism, particularly anti-Black racism.

### **Financial Impact**

N/A

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

N/A

### **Conclusion**

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan is a critical part of building a more inclusive and equitable City, supporting a diverse workforce and fostering an equitable and inclusive workplace culture.

Community consultations will ensure that as many people as possible have meaningful opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas. Community consultation is critical to and will inform the development of a strategy and action plan to address racism, particularly anti-Black racism.

**For more information**, please contact: Zincia Francis, Diversity & Inclusion Officer, ext. 8159, [zincia.francis@vaughan.ca](mailto:zincia.francis@vaughan.ca)

**Attachments**

N/A

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**Approved by**

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**Reviewed by**

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Jim Harnum, City Manager