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The Regional Municipality of Durham

MINUTES

DURHAM REGION ANTI-RACISM TASKFORCE

Thursday, October 24, 2024

A meeting of the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce was held on Thursday, October 24, 2024 in Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby, Ontario at 7:01 PM. Electronic participation was offered for this meeting.

1. Traditional Territory Acknowledgment

Chair Samuel read the following land acknowledgement:

The Region of Durham exists on lands that the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg inhabited for thousands of years prior to European colonization. These lands are the traditional and treaty territories of the Nations covered under the Williams Treaties, including the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Alderville First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, and the Chippewa Nations of Georgina Island, Beausoleil and Rama.

We honour, recognize, and respect Indigenous Peoples as rights holders and stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live. In our efforts towards reconciliation, we continue to build and strengthen relationships with First Nations, as well as the growing Inuit communities and large Métis communities and here in Durham. We commit to learning from Indigenous values and knowledge, building opportunities for collaboration, and recognizing that we are all connected.

2. Roll Call

Present: S. Bookal, Community Member
PG Case, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative, Vice-Chair
R. Coelho, Community Member
A. Frempong, Community Member
T. Hancock, Community Member attended the meeting at 7:32 PM
J. Munawa, Community Member
B. Nelson, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative
C. Oyeniran, Community Member
N. Samuel, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative, Chair
J. Williamson, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative
G. Wilson-Beier, Community Member
*** all Members participated electronically**

Absent: E. Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer
Councillor Lee, Regional Council

Councillor Shahid, Regional Council

Staff

Present: A. Hector-Alexander, Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
P. Hines, Manager, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
H. Mohammed, Policy Coordinator, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
R. Inacio, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT
V. Walker, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services
*** all staff participated electronically**

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by R. Coelho, Seconded by A. Frempong,
That the minutes of the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting
held on Thursday, September 26, 2024, be adopted.

CARRIED

5. Delegations

A) Dwayne Rabideau, re: Protesting on Overpasses

Dwayne Rabideau was not in attendance at the meeting.

6. Presentations

A) Anil Philip, Community Legal Worker, Black Legal Action Centre, and Danette Edwards, Legal Director, Black Legal Action Centre, re: Black Legal Action Centre

Anil Philip, Community Legal Worker, Black Legal Action Centre, Demar Kemar, Executive Director, Black Legal Action Centre, Shevaun Pierre, Paralegal and Intake Coordinator, Black Legal Action Centre, and Abimbola Ajaja, Paralegal Student, Black Legal Action Centre, provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to the Black Legal Action Centre.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Overview
- Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) Introduction
- What is BLAC?
- Who is BLAC?
- Our Network
- Areas of Law
- Process

- Our Work
 - Advocacy
 - Litigation
 - Policy Reform
 - Partner Initiatives

A. Philip responded to questions from the Committee regarding the financial eligibility criteria for individuals and families; the supports available to individuals that don't meet the family criteria; whether the complaint statistics are tracked year over year, and how the trending data is used; what are the markers that indicate subtle forms of discrimination and how is it assessed; and what topics are discussed in public information sessions.

B) Allison Hector-Alexander, Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Region of Durham, re: Durham Region's Humanitarian Response in Support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Allison Hector-Alexander, Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Region of Durham, provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to Durham Region's Humanitarian Response in Support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Background
- Current State
- Countries of Origin
- Interim Housing Assistance Program (IHAP)
- Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)
- Additional Supports
- Peel Reception Centre
- Moving Forward

A. Hector-Alexander responded to questions from the Committee regarding the criteria to access the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) and how it can be used; how the new Peel Reception Centre will provide resettlement triage support for individuals and families; advocacy to higher levels of government to receive funding up front; whether remedies are available if funding is not reimbursed; and what can be expected with respect to the changes to funding.

7. Information Items

There were no information items.

8. Discussion Items

A) Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce (DRART) Council Report

A. Hector-Alexander stated that the annual DRART update report to Council is being prepared with an anticipation of it being submitted to the Finance and Administration Committee and Council in November.

H. Mohammed provided the following overview of items that will be included in the report:

- A summary of the actions carried out by each of the four (4) working groups to date, along with information of next steps for each of the working groups in the first section of the report;
- Highlights of the Committee's activities and accomplishments will be included in the second section of the report. Items will include the Committee's letter advocating for the continued support of asylum seekers and refugees; Chair Samuel and Vice-Chair Case's delegation before Pickering Council following comments by a local councillor; the Committee's letter condemning offensive statements made by a local councillor; the scholarship application workshop; and the community dinner hosted by the DRART to welcome newcomers to the Region; and
- A copy of the DRART's workplan will be provided as an attachment to the report.

H. Mohammed stated that a draft copy of the report will be circulated to Members to review and comment on before it is finalized.

B) Sub-Committee Updates

1. EDI Working Group

Chair Samuel provided an update on behalf of the EDI Working Group and stated that the Working Group has engaged with the Legal department to seek advice for developing anti-hate/anti-discrimination by-laws for the Region. She advised that Legal has outlined key anti-hate legislation at the provincial and federal levels but discovered legislation at the municipal level does not exist. Chair Samuel stated that as a result, the Working Group is shifting its focus towards advocacy work and identifying and filling gaps in the legislation at the municipal level.

P. Hines added that while municipal legislation to protect individuals from hate motivated incidents/crime does not exist, the Legal department pointed us toward the Region's Public Code of Conduct, the Council Code of Conduct, and the Procedural By-law.

P. Hines concluded that the identified gaps create an opportunity for the development of further action items for the Working Group along with a shift

in focus to lobbying towards by-law or policy development at the municipal level.

2. DRPS Working Group

S. Bookal provided an update on behalf of the DRPS Working Group and stated that the Working Group has been in communication with Staff Sergeant D. Peden and is working towards scheduling a meeting to continue the ongoing discussions regarding diversity, equity and inclusion.

H. Mohammed stated that the Working Group is also working towards inviting Staff Sergeant D. Peden to a future meeting and advised that the group continues to follow up with DRPS for responses to the questions posed to V. Chavannes earlier this year, which will be shared with Committee members once received. H. Mohammed further stated that the Working Group and DRPS are considering collaborations for upcoming DEI initiatives and more information will be shared with the Committee as it becomes available.

3. School Board Working Group

G. Wilson-Beier advised that there are no updates for the School Board Working Group.

4. Education Working Group

A. Hector-Alexander provided an update on behalf of the Education Working Group and stated that the DEI Municipal Symposium is taking place on Saturday, October 26 at Regional Headquarters beginning at 9:00 AM. She further stated that the symposium will provide an opportunity for committees, taskforces and working groups in the Region to connect, explore collaboration opportunities and share resources.

A. Hector-Alexander advised that Dr. Nicole Bernhardt, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto, will be the keynote speaker for the Symposium, and their speech will address spheres of influence, reasonableness, and diversity, equity and inclusion. A. Hector-Alexander stated that the afternoon session will be in a workshop format that will look at the goals and workplans of the groups in attendance to identify areas for future collaboration. Committee members were encouraged to register for the event.

A. Hector-Alexander responded to questions from the Committee with regards to whether partial attendance is permitted; and whether volunteers are needed for the event.

9. **Other Business**

A) Healthy Democracy Forum

Following a question from the Committee regarding the outcome of the Healthy Democracy Forum that took place on October 19th and 20th, A. Hector-Alexander stated that she received feedback that the forum was a success, was overall positive, and achieved a good turnout.

B) Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) Equity Invitational Learning Series

S. Bookal stated that the DCDSB is hosting an Equity Invitational Learning Series in partnership with the Black Excellence Advisory Committee that will take place on November 7th and invited Committee members to attend. S. Bookal further stated that the event will educate Black students and families about becoming teachers and the pathways to get there.

S. Bookal advised that two (2) superintendents from York Region are the keynote speakers that will lead a discussion that aims at promoting careers in education and encouraging Black students to enroll in teachers' college.

S. Bookal stated that the DCDSB Black Student Excellence Award recipient will be announced at the event and advised that there are twelve (12) high school student nominations for the award.

C) Rest or Reform Conference: Social Justice, Equity & Institutional Reformation

A. Frempong stated that the first annual Rest or Reform Conference, hosted by the Kujipenda Cultural Centre and Ifarada Centre for Excellence, took place on October 24th at the Ajax Convention Centre. A. Frempong advised that A. Hector-Alexander and C. Oyeniran presented at the event and congratulated them on their positive contribution.

D) Canada's Black Justice Strategy

T. Hancock stated that the federal government has endorsed the development of Canada's Black Justice Strategy which proposes justice reform for the Black community. T. Hancock further stated that the strategy is being developed by Black-led organizations across Canada and advised that there is currently no government funding attached to the development of the strategy.

T. Hancock also stated that the Senate will be considering amendments to legislation that would change the age of youth to be tried as adults, and indicated that this change would predominantly impact youth from Black and racialized communities.

T. Hancock suggested that this topic could be discussed in more detail at a future meeting to explore ways to mobilize within the community and stated the importance of community support of this initiative.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting will be held on Thursday, November 28, 2024 at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby.

11. Adjournment

Moved by A. Frempong, Seconded by G. Wilson-Beier,
That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM

Respectfully submitted,

N. Samuel, Chair

V. Walker, Committee Clerk