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The Regional Municipality of Durham

MINUTES

DURHAM REGION ANTI-RACISM TASKFORCE

Thursday, March 27, 2025

A meeting of the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce was held on Thursday, March 27, 2025 in Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby, Ontario at 7:03 PM. Electronic participation was offered for this meeting.

Moved by S. Bookal, Seconded by G. Wilson-Beier,
That in the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, that Councillor Lee be appointed as Chair for the duration of the meeting.

CARRIED

Councillor Lee assumed the Chair.

1. Traditional Territory Acknowledgment

Councillor Lee 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 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
A. Frempong, Community Member
B. Goodwin, Commissioner of Corporate Services attended the meeting at 7:30 PM
Councillor Lee, Regional Council
J. Munawa, Community Member
B. Nelson, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative
J. Williamson, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative

G. Wilson-Beier, Community Member

*** all members participated electronically**

Absent: E. Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer
PG Case, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative, Vice-Chair
R. Coelho, Community Member
N. Samuel, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative, Chair
Councillor Shahid, Regional Council

Staff

Present: A. Hector-Alexander, Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
P. Hines, Manager, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
A. Sharma, Policy Advisor, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
S. Vamathevan, 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 B. Nelson, Seconded by G. Wilson-Beier,
That the minutes of the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting
held on Thursday, February 27, 2025, be adopted.
CARRIED

5. Delegations

There were no delegations to be heard.

6. Presentations

A) Rabbi Tzali Borenstein, Founder and Co-Director, Chabad Jewish Community
Centre of Durham Region, re: Understanding Antisemitism

Rabbi Tzali Borenstein, Founder and Co-Director, Chabad Jewish Community
Centre of Durham Region provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to
Understanding Antisemitism.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- 2023 Snapshot
- Total Incidents Reported in the Annual B'nai Brith Audit of Antisemitic Events
- Jewish

- Religion
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Nation
 - Soul Identity
- Jewish Religion
- Shabbat
- Kosher Dietary Laws – Kosher versus Non-Kosher Foods
 - Animals
 - Meat & Dairy
 - Supervision
- Jewish Holidays
- What is Antisemitism?
 - Etymology
 - Definition
- Anti-Jewish

Rabbi Borenstein responded to questions from the Committee with respect to the recent increase in antisemitic incidences; whether misinformation is a contributing factor to the increase in hate crimes being experienced in the community; and how the Committee can support the work of the Chabad Jewish Community Centre in raising awareness and educating the community of the increases in incidences of hate and antisemitism taking place in the community.

B) Melissa Berney, Detective Constable, Durham Regional Police Services, Rob Antaya, Acting Superintendent, Durham Regional Police Services, re:
Responding to Incidents of Hate in the Community

Melissa Berney, Detective Constable, Durham Regional Police Services, Rob Antaya, Acting Superintendent, Durham Regional Police Services, Christina Boyd, Detective Constable, Durham Regional Police Services, and Christopher Barkell, Detective, Durham Regional Police Services, provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to Responding to Incidents of Hate in the Community.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Hate Motivated Crime
- Common Examples
 - Assault
 - Mischief
 - Harassments
- Hate Motivated Incident
- Common Examples
- Criminal Law Remedies to Combat Hate
- How Durham Regional Police Services (DRPS) Addresses Hate Crimes

- DRPS Member Education & Support
 - DRPS Equity & Inclusion Unit
- Community Resources
 - Development of Hate Crime Dashboard
 - Hate Crime Webpage on our DRPS Website
- DRPS Hate Crime Statistics
- Other Police Service Statistics
 - Waterloo Regional Police Service
 - London Police Service
 - Hamilton Police Service
- Intelligence Operations Section

M. Berney, R. Antaya and C. Boyd responded to questions from the Committee with respect to the different classifications of hate-related offences; whether officers determine the classification of a hate-related offence at the time of reporting or at a later point of an investigation; whether the hate crime dashboard being developed will be integrated into DRPS' monthly crime and traffic dashboard, and whether search filters would allow categorization by specific parameters; the resources that are available to victims of a hate motivated incident, and for incidents that do not meet the threshold of a criminal offence; and how awareness can be raised to encourage citizens to contact the police to report hate crimes.

7. Information Items

There were no information items.

8. Discussion Items

A) 2024 Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce (DRART) Workplan Update

A. Hector-Alexander stated that the 2024 DRART Workplan set out the Committee's key priority areas which included the following initiatives:

- The four (4) established subcommittees which focus on engaging with the Durham Regional Police Service, engaging with school boards located in the Region, developing connections with equity-focused advocacy groups and organizations, and developing a speakers' series and symposium to increase the DRART's presence in the community;
- Conducting a jurisdictional scan to investigate the existing public reporting systems for hate incidents; and
- Developing a formal protocol for reporting hate in the Region.

A. Hector-Alexander advised that staff have identified new project areas for the Committee to undertake going forward that will allow the Committee to

build on its existing initiatives and explore other areas for collaboration. She stated that the proposed project areas will replace the current sub-committee undertakings and noted there will be an overlap between the Committee's current undertakings and the new proposed project areas. [Further discussion ensued on this matter. See Item 8. B) on page 5.]

B) Committee Project Assignments

A. Hector-Alexander stated that the following proposed projects have been identified as relevant focus areas for the Committee to undertake, which intersect with the focus areas identified in the 2024 DRART Workplan:

- Organizing a community connections event;
- Developing a protocol for reporting non-criminal hate activity;
- Establishing key messages – Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI); and
- Developing anti-hate resources and conference.

General discussion ensued with regards to how safe residents feel with the continued increase in hate incidents taking place in the Region, and how that compares to other regions and municipalities in Ontario; the importance of raising awareness for reporting incidents of hate; and making the reported data publicly available.

Members provided feedback on the proposed project assignments and discussed potential impacts on community engagement and collaboration.

It was the consensus of the Committee that members identify the project area they wish to work on and advise staff of their preference. A. Hector-Alexander advised members that they can undertake work on more than one project if they are interested in multiple focus areas.

9. Other Business

A) Islamophobic Incident of Hate at Ajax Library

A. Frempong advised that an Islamophobic hate incident occurred at the Ajax Public Library on March 22, 2025. She also stated that there has been a rise in antisemitic incidences that occurred earlier this year at the Whitby Public Library and other areas in Whitby.

A. Frempong stated that given the rise in incidents of hate occurring in the community, that the Committee should consider establishing a communication strategy that sets out how the Committee can respond to and publicly address future hate-related incidents.

A. Frempong further stated that the Town of Ajax and the Region of Durham have issued public statements regarding these events and stated that the DRART should also consider releasing a statement condemning these acts and showing support for the targeted individuals.

Moved by A. Frempong, Seconded by B. Nelson,
That the meeting be closed to the public in order to consider personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees.

CARRIED

The Committee went into closed session at 8:40 PM and reconvened at 8:56 PM.

[Refer to the Closed Meeting minutes of March 27, 2025.]

Councillor Lee advised that during the closed session general discussion ensued with regards to specifics relating to an identifiable individual.

Moved by A. Frempong, Seconded by B. Nelson,
That the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce develop an open letter of condemnation to all forms of hate that have recently occurred in the Region of Durham, most notably the incidences of antisemitism that occurred at the Whitby Public Library and surrounding areas in January 2025, and the recent Islamophobic incident that occurred at the Ajax Public Library on March 22, 2025; and

That the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce's Chair, Vice-Chair and Member A. Frempong draft an open letter of condemnation on behalf of the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce that all members will be signatories to.

CARRIED

B) Multicultural and Anti-Racism Grant Event

P. Hines stated that a community member has received the Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grant and will be hosting an event on May 3, 2025, which will focus on challenging the misconceptions of Black Immigrants, highlighting some of the barriers they encounter, and promoting respect and appreciation for individuals of African decent.

P. Hines advised that a member of the Whitby Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Committee has invited members of DRART to attend the event.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting will be held on Thursday, April 24, 2025 at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby.

11. Adjournment

Moved by S. Bookal, Seconded by G. Wilson-Beier

That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Lee, Acting Chair

V. Walker, Committee Clerk