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## **The Regional Municipality of Durham**

### **MINUTES**

#### **DURHAM REGION ANTI-RACISM TASKFORCE**

**Thursday, May 22, 2025**

A meeting of the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce was held on Thursday, May 22, 2025 in Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby, Ontario at 7:03 PM. Electronic participation was offered for this meeting.

#### **1. Traditional Territory Acknowledgment**

Vice-Chair Case 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  
PG Case, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative, Vice-Chair  
R. Coelho, Community Member  
A. Frempong, Community Member  
B. Goodwin, Commissioner of Corporate Services  
Councillor Lee, Regional Council  
Councillor Shahid, Regional Council attended the meeting at 7:13 PM  
J. Williamson, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative  
G. Wilson-Beier, Community Member  
**\* all Members participated electronically**

Absent: E. Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer  
J. Munawa, Community Member  
B. Nelson, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative  
N. Samuel, Industry/Association/Public Institution Representative, Chair

Staff

Present: A. Hector-Alexander, Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
P. Hines, Manager, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
N. Honarbakhsh, Policy Coordinator, 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 A. Frempong, Seconded by Councillor Lee,  
That the minutes of the following meetings be adopted:

- Regular Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting held on March 27, 2025; and
- Closed Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting held on March 27, 2025.

CARRIED

**5. Delegations**

There were no delegations to be heard.

**6. Presentations**

A) Dr. Kashmala Qasim, Post Doctoral Fellow, University of Toronto – Health Professions Education, re: Impact of Hate in the Community

Dr. Kashmala Qasim, Post Doctoral Fellow, University of Toronto – Health Professions Education, provided a PowerPoint presentation with regards to the Impact of Hate in the Community.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Definitions and Statistics
  - Let's get the definitions out of the way
  - Ontario Human Rights Commission
  - Why Muslims – Why Canada?
  - Has Islamophobia Increased?
  - Social Context of Islamophobia
- Real-Life Examples
  - Islamophobia in Durham Region
  - What are your thoughts on seeing religious garb?
- When did Muslims come to Canada?
- Early Muslims

- Slave Trade
- Muslims in Toronto
- Amira Elahawaby
- Muslim Women of Durham Region
- Our Work
- Islamic History Month Events
- How You Can Help
- Be an Ally

D. Qasim responded to questions from the Committee with respect to what steps can be taken by the Committee and leaders in the community to educate and positively influence the public on the impacts of hate and bring positive changes to the community; how to ensure messaging and education is widespread to reach all members of the community; whether there are any aspects where the Region falls short in terms of addressing or responding to incidences of hate; and how peers and bystanders can best respond to hate motivated incidences they are a witness to.

## **7. Information Items**

There were no information items.

## **8. Discussion Items**

### **A) Responding to Hate Incidents**

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A. Sharma stated that at a recent Committee of the Whole meeting, staff were directed to investigate the possibility of establishing a hate reporting protocol or policy at the Region.

A. Sharma advised that data on both hate-motivated crime and hate-motivated incidents are important in addressing hate activity in Durham. She further advised that in addition to sharing information on hate activity with relevant human rights organizations, the Region can play a larger part in the collection of data relating to hate activity and the supports provided to individuals and communities.

A. Sharma stated that staff examined hate reporting initiatives in other municipalities in Ontario and developed the proposed community-led hate reporting protocol based off models adopted in Chatham-Kent and Ottawa where hate reporting is led by victims' services staff as the first point of contact. She advised that reporting hate related activity is known to be underreported, and this proposed model seeks to reduce reluctance in reporting incidences of hate. A. Hector-Alexander added that relevant religious and human rights organizations were engaged to provide input on the proposed program.

A. Sharma stated that a staff report will be presented to the Finance and Administration Committee and Council in June seeking approval of a two-year pilot project for the community-led hate reporting program which will include the development of a hate reporting portal and webpage. She further stated that the

staff report will include a recommendation that Regional Council request the Durham Region Police Services Board publicly release data relating to hate activity on an annual basis.

Positive feedback relating to the pilot program was received from members of the Committee. General discussion followed with regards to logistics of the reporting tool and process; and including relevant information and disclaimers within the reporting tool.

Staff responded to questions from the Committee with regards to the anticipated cost of the pilot program; whether staff will have the ability to authenticate submissions made through the reporting process; whether victims services staff will provide appropriate support and guidance to victims reporting hate motivated incidents; whether relevant departments and external organizations will be informed of report submissions; whether express consent from the victim would be required in order to share submission details with relevant external organizations; and whether data collected through the reporting tool will be publicly available.

B) Together Against Hate – Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) Funded Project

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P. Hines stated that the Region has received funding from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) National Anti-Racism Fund that will be used to launch a Together Against Hate Campaign.

P. Hines advised that the CRRF requires that the campaign align with certain project themes and objectives that focus on public awareness and intercultural community building, with results leading to an increase in public awareness of public policy surrounding race relations and anti-hate within local communities and increasing community knowledge regarding hate activity, racism, and discrimination.

P. Hines outlined the anticipated timelines of the project and detailed the following three primary phases that will comprise the proposed campaign:

- The Coalition Building phase will focus on connecting with various community organizations to build a coalition that ensures subject matter experts and people with lived experiences have an opportunity to collaborate and share information and ideas of what should be included in the other phases of the campaign. This information will also be used to identify gaps in legislation and develop recommendations for policy changes to be presented to Council upon completion of the project.
- The Public Awareness Campaign phase will be centred around the creation and distribution of various educational and capacity-building resources that will focus on how to identify and report hate activity, outline how to support victims of hate, and guide communities on how

to navigate incidences of hate and advocate against it. Resources are expected to include videos, newsletters, posters, brochures, and various online tools, including a Durham-specific online toolkit.

- An Anti-Hate Conference, scheduled to take place in November of this year, will be organized based on input from the Coalition Building phase, and feedback from subject matter experts and people with lived experience. The conference will provide an opportunity for capacity building among attendees, information sharing, and provide helpful tools and resources for navigating hate in the community.

P. Hines stated that upon completion of the three phases of the campaign, a staff report will be submitted to Committee and Council to summarize each phase of the project and identify relevant gaps and propose recommendations for policy changes.

P. Hines stated that there will be opportunities for the DRART to participate in each phase of the program and suggested that as an advisory body to Committee and Council, the DRART could deliver a presentation to the Finance and Administrative Committee to accompany the staff report.

Staff responded to questions from the Committee with regards to the possibility of utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) to respond to online inquiries with Durham-specific resources; whether the project requires approval from Council; and whether a portion of the funding will be used towards the community-led hate reporting protocol pilot program.

## C) Subcommittee Updates

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### 1. Education Working Group

A. Hector-Alexander provided an update on behalf of the Education Working Group and stated that a community connections event is being organized for June 18<sup>th</sup> at the Audley Recreation Centre in Ajax commencing at 6:30 PM. She advised that the focus of the event is to provide education with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and explain how DEI benefits the community.

A. Hector-Alexander further advised that the event will include a keynote speech delivered by Camille Dundas, followed by a panelist discussion with opportunities for attendees to ask questions.

### 2. DRPS Working Group

Councillor Lee provided the following update on behalf of the DRPS Working Group:

- The Working Group met with members of the Durham Region Police Services (DRPS) Board and learned about training for board members and the DRPS strategic plan. Board members are required to

complete 20 hours of mandatory training which includes a compulsory hate training component. The strategic plan is completed every four years and follows the requirements contained in the Community Safety and Policing Act.

- DRPS recently presented the results of the Equity Assessment that consists of four key metrics and is structured as a 12-month action plan. The DRPS Working Group will follow the process and provide feedback where appropriate. The Working Group is arranging for Ty Smith, the Equity Assessment lead, to present at a future DRART meeting to provide an opportunity for members to ask questions about the plan.
- The Working Group is arranging a meeting with the chair of the DRPS Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) to discuss the recent committee changes and lack of communication from leadership regarding the changes.

A. Sharma added that the working group also met with DRPS Acting Human Resources Director, Danielle Kent-Johnston, to learn about the hiring and promotion processes at DRPS and advised that DRPS follows a 7-step hiring process. A. Sharma shared insights learned during that meeting with regards to DRPS employee turnover and advised that a new DRPS employee engagement survey and census will be launched this summer.

3. EDI Working Group

There were no new updates from the EDI Working Group.

4. School Board Working Group

There were no new updates from the School Board Working Group.

**9. Other Business**

A) Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce (DRART) Meeting Mode Preferences

Members participated in a general discussion with regards to the Committee and sub-committee meeting schedules; members' preferences for attending meetings in-person versus electronically; and whether the Committee's Terms of Reference should be updated to set out an agreed upon meeting delivery format for each meeting.

It was the consensus of the Committee that virtual meetings are generally preferred, with in-person meetings being scheduled up to two times per year.

Moved by A. Frempong, Seconded by Councillor Lee,  
That the Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting scheduled for June 26, 2025 take place in a hybrid format and Members be encouraged to attend in-person.

CARRIED

B) Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce (DRART) Logo Update

Following a question from the Committee regarding whether consideration has been given to updating the DRART logo, A. Hector-Alexander advised that a member of the communications team will be invited to the next meeting to discuss building templates for the Committee's webpage and that this item can be included in that discussion.

C) Durham Region Youth Pride Event

P. Hines stated that the Region is hosting its annual Youth Pride Event, which will take place on June 1<sup>st</sup> at Regional Headquarters from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. She advised that over 30 resource village participants will be in attendance along with various entertainers.

P. Hines welcomed members to attend and to promote the event with their networks.

D) Jewish Heritage Event in Ajax

Councillor Lee shared that the Town of Ajax is hosting a Jewish Heritage Event on May 28<sup>th</sup> at the Audley Recreation Centre in Ajax. He added that the event will celebrate Jewish heritage and include a panel discussion and highlight Jewish contributions to the community.

E) Palestinian Film Screening and Discussion Event

Councillor Lee shared that the Pickering Palestinian Association is hosting a film screening and discussion event at the Chestnut Hill Recreation Complex in Pickering from 6:30 PM to 10:30 PM on May 30<sup>th</sup> featuring the 2022 documentary 'Tantura'.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

The next regularly scheduled Durham Region Anti-Racism Taskforce meeting will be held on Thursday, June 26, 2025 at 7:00 PM in Meeting Room 1-B, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby.

**11. Adjournment**

Moved by Councillor Shahid, Seconded by A. Frempong,  
That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

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PG Case, Vice-Chair

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V. Walker, Committee Clerk