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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. CMS24-044

Subject: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Status Update

Prepared by: Nichole Campsall, Cultural Development Coordinator

Department: Community Services

Date: December 2, 2024

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS24-044 be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report provides details regarding ongoing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts and 2025 DEI objectives within the community.

- The Town is currently implementing a variety of initiatives that address DEI within the community.
- There is a need for the Town to more formally address DEI in the community.
- Staff propose developing a workplan that provides a clear path forward in addressing DEI across Aurora.

Background

The Town established the Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Racism Task Force on July 14, 2020. The duties and functions of the task force were as follows:

- To work with community groups within Aurora and York Region to identify and develop priorities for the proposed task force;
- To identify opportunities to increase engagement with people of colour; and
- To foster an increased public awareness of anti-racism.

The Task Force met 12 times from the end of 2020 until the end of the previous Council term in 2022. There was no formal decision to end the task force, and like all other boards and committees, it came to an end when the Council term was up. As it was ad-hoc in nature, it was not re-established for this current term of Council.

The Town's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion 2021-2024 Strategic Action Plan was approved on Tuesday, October 26, 2021 and provides recommendations on how the Town can improve its workplace diversity and equity. The plan was developed based on a review of key Town documents and policies, input from the senior leadership team and key collaborators.

On March 28, 2023, Milton Hart, Chair of the Aurora Black Caucus, delegated to Town Council. Mr. Hart provided background on the Aurora Black Caucus and requested that the Town continue strengthening its partnership with Black community organizations on initiatives including the creation of a Dismantling of Anti-Black Racism Policy, a formal replacement of the former Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Racism Task Force. Upon the conclusion of Mr. Hart's presentation staff were directed to report back to Council with options.

Since that time staff have been meeting to discuss options as to how to formally address DEI within the community and beyond the scope of the existing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Action Plan, which is internally focused.

Analysis

The Town is currently implementing a variety of initiatives that address DEI within the community.

Many of the Town's current initiatives address DEI in various ways. Staff consistently work to gauge community needs around DEI and address those needs with what resources are available.

Town staff strive to create feelings of inclusion and safety and recognize the community's right to play and participate in the various programs and events the Town hosts. Creating opportunities that bring value to residents, such as leadership opportunities, program options, as well as focusing on developing the future, are part of the work being done. It is important to staff to remove barriers to participation as much as possible and provide equitable access to programs and services.

The following table summarizes some of the many DEI initiatives that Town staff currently undertake:

Initiative	Category	Division Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Day “Lead Her” • Girls Got Game Basketball Program • Language Programs • Adaptive Aquatics • Therapeutic Pool Programming • Without Walls • Seniors’ Centre in the Mail, Sensory Swims, Skates and Gym Drop-Ins 	Programs	Aquatics & Fitness, Programs and Sport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABLE Network • Centre for Immigrant and Community Services (CICS) • Municipal Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Group • Aurora Black Community Association • Aurora Black Caucus • York Pride 	Community Partnerships	Aquatics & Fitness, Culture, Programs and Sport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black History Month • National Indigenous Peoples Day • Emancipation Day • Multicultural Festival • National Day for Truth and Reconciliation • Menorah Lighting • Volunteer & Employment Fairs • Town Hall Pop- Ups • Accessibility in Events • CICS Newcomer Bus Trips & Open Houses 	Community Events	Culture, Recreation, Special Events and Sport
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport Plan, including Sport DEI Policy • Cultural Action Plan • Mapping Diversity 	Plans & Strategies	Culture, Recreation and Sport

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadmap for Persons with a Disability 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair Access • Subsidy Programs • Community Partnership Grant • Inclusion support • Jays Care Grant • Website Translation 	Community Support	Programs, Aquatics & Fitness, Business Support and Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proclamations • Aurora Museum & Archives Exhibits and Memorials • DEI Calendar • Development of Community Reflection Space 	Community Awareness	Culture and Communications

There is a need for the Town to more formally address DEI in the community.

Cultural movements and global conflicts are having undeniable effects in our community. We are also seeing an aging population, an influx of newcomers and overall lack of affordability. With this, it is clear to staff and community members that the Town needs to formally address DEI here in Aurora. While Town staff are doing good work, without a formal strategy and funding, this work can be limited and lack cohesiveness.

While the Town’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion 2021-2024 Strategic Action Plan guides the work staff does internally, with the conclusion of the Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Racism Task Force in 2022, there is no other formal Town group committed to ensuring that DEI concerns are addressed, and that work is done proactively and consistently within the community.

Staff propose developing a workplan that provides a clear path forward in addressing DEI across Aurora.

A clear path forward in the Town’s DEI work is crucial to the development of cohesive and effective initiatives. It will lead to longevity and sustainability through strategic direction. Staff are often faced with competing expectations and external pressures when working in the DEI sphere, and a plan will help to balance those expectations. A

concrete plan of action will also help to identify resources available and how to allocate those resources most effectively.

Staff propose working with a DEI expert to develop such a plan. As part of this work, staff will also explore the creation of a staff committee structured like the Indigenous Relations Committee (IRC). The IRC has facilitated many initiatives that support the Town's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. Such initiatives include establishing formal land acknowledgement plaques in Town facilities, installing Every Child Matters rink boards in Town community centres, National Indigenous People's Day and Indigenous History Month celebrations, as well as recognizing National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. A DEI committee could operate similarly and work to address the gap that currently exists on the DEI front in a formal manner with a workplan in place.

An internal staff committee would support internal DEI initiatives but focus mainly on DEI initiatives in the community. This committee would welcome staff to join based on their personal interest, as well as job function, with a corporation-wide call for members to ensure that the opportunity is extended to all who may wish to be a part of the committee, and there is representation from various departments.

Moreover, staff will undertake community engagement in 2025, that may include a community roundtable, which would provide additional direction on addressing DEI in a formal and long-term manner.

The support and guidance of a DEI expert with the appropriate expertise will ensure that any plan created includes the necessary steps, and that each step is carried out effectively and with careful consideration of all key collaborators. Their experience in similar projects would provide the knowledge and skillset needed to ensure the process of developing a workplan is accurate, based on current DEI research and trends, and includes appropriate community input.

The following are proposed as next steps:

- In early 2025, form a staff working group with representatives from various departments that will engage the services of a DEI expert to support the development of a DEI workplan based on community consultation and engagement with local community organisations.
- As a staff working group, work with the DEI expert and community to begin initial implementation of the plan.

- At the end of 2025, report back to Council on the development and initial implementation of the workplan, identifying intended next steps for 2026 and beyond.

Advisory Committee Review

When developing the DEI workplan in 2025, the proposed staff working group will consult with all relevant advisory committees.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

The 2025 budget includes a total of \$15,000 to engage a consultant to provide guidance on the creation of a DEI workplan and to develop an internal staff DEI committee.

Communications Considerations

Corporate Communications will assist to inform, educate and support the DEI initiatives with the Town.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

DEI efforts support the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Celebrating and promoting our culture
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

To more formally address DEI in the community and support the Town's current DEI efforts, staff recommend working with a DEI consultant in 2025 to help develop a plan that frames how Town staff will continue to engage with the community on DEI-related issues.

Attachments

None.

Previous Reports

None.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on November 14, 2024

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer