

Markham Council Meeting – Diversity Action Plan and Anti-Black Racism Plan

March 21, 2022

Thank you,

Mayor Scarpitti, Members of Council, Staff and Guests,

My name is Madge Logan, I am a longtime resident of Markham. My husband and I moved to Markham in 1972, my two daughters attended schools in Markham, and they all along with extended family members all continue to live in Markham. I am speaking today not only as a resident but also as a member of the York Region Alliance of African Canadian Caribbean Communities and of the Mayor's Race Relations Advisory Committee.

It is a distinct pleasure to share with you some of what I have learned from attending, sharing, listening, and reflecting on several of the consultations regarding the Diversity Action Plan and the Anti-Black Racism Plan which I attended, and including completing the online survey.

As a long-term resident of the City of Markham (almost 50 years) I have been cognizant of and pleased about the

changing racial and cultural diversity of the community. I therefore truly appreciate this unique opportunity to contribute and to help shape policy, program, services, and subsequent actions for the city.

Clearly the whole community expressed a desire to be more involved and engaged in the policy and decision making for the city.

Participants in the consultations identified that the age of departments and services operating in silos is past as that is not serving everyone well.

During the consultations I heard and I also believe that there must be a true recognition of the intersection between policy, services, and programs that are better designed to meet the changing and diverse needs of our more racially and culturally diverse community. It became patently clear that the community sees what works and what doesn't work

Participants spoke from the heart, and demonstrated that they care about each other, seniors, the youth, the differently abled, the Indigenous and racialized communities. They care about services, the arts and culture and most definitely about better transportation services especially for the youth and seniors who are most impacted by poor transit services.

They were also clear about their willingness to get to know each other, to work together and the need for the city to facilitate more and more varied opportunities to do so.

You and others may ask...Why are there two plans? It is my understanding and strong belief that there are two plans because each plan addresses different issues.

The Diversity Action Plan focuses on building a framework with

recommendations and actions that support policy, programs, services, spaces, and decision making that are fair, inclusive, equitable and accessible to all residents.

The Anti- Black Racism Action Plan addresses issues that are specific to the Black Community and not only confronts anti-Black racism, it also seeks to address systemic and other barriers to ensure that all residents regardless of race can contribute fully and live in dignity in the city of Markham.

Statistics Canada recently released it's 2020 report on Hate Crimes in Canada. The report shows the following disturbing statistics.

- Hate crimes in Canada increased by 37%

- Crimes against Black people rose by 92%

Kasari Govender British Columbia's human rights commissioner said and I quote:

“ We need to acknowledge the conditions under which hate flourishes in order to address it. “

As identified in the Ontario Anti-Black Racism plan the stigma and stereotypes Black Ontarians and communities face have impacted public policies, decision-making and services. As a result, in nearly every measure of opportunity, security and fairness in our society, anti-Black racism is felt.

Black children are more likely to be in foster care or enrolled in lower academic streams.

Black men are more likely to interact with the justice system than their white counterparts at all levels of society.

Black women are more likely than white women to be unemployed or underemployed, despite having higher levels of education: 8.8% of Black women with university degrees are unemployed, compared to 5.7% of white women with high school diplomas.

The status quo is unacceptable.

The Black Community in particular, has not only recognized this but has lived it and has frequently

identified and spoken about substantial ways in which things must change systemically. We have observed that there are few Black voices at the City leadership level so that there is some belief that our needs are seldom reflected when critical decisions are made. We are seldom seen where it counts, particularly at the leadership and policy making level. This is not because of ability, levels of education, lack of effort, competencies or skills... it is because of racist attitudes and beliefs about Black people that denies such opportunities and access to places where decisions are made.

Hence the need for two different but complementary plans.

Research has shown that when the community sees itself as part of the decision making the confidence and trust in that decision is elevated and believed. There must be a clear intent to change that reality.

When we come to access services, ask questions, seek help, apply for employment, ask to see a manager or supervisor, respond to advertised employment opportunities, who do we see? Do we see ourselves reflected in who responds to us in all these areas, from governance to entry level employees?

Most of the time we do not.

My fervent hope that this is truly just the beginning of the conversation. We recognize that this is a journey in which the dialogue needs to continue, and a clear destination identified. Therefore, plans will need to be frequently revisited so that when and where necessary, adjustments can be made based on lessons learned and appropriate data gathered and analyzed.

What gets measured is what gets done.

I do recognize that strides have been made since I first came to live in Markham. Mayor Scarpitti recognizes and is committed to the need to address issues of Diversity and the council has listened. Positive direction is evident in the appointment of the Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, a Special Advisor to the Mayor, The Black Youth Liaison Committee, updating the Diversity Action Plan and the establishment of the Anti-Black Racism Strategy. I am aware that other actions are in the discussion stage.

Now is the time to continue the involvement of the Black community, unpack the data gathered from the extensive consultations and the survey to make the necessary sustainable changes, and remove the systemic barriers clearly noted in the responses submitted.

I have truly appreciated the opportunity to participate learn, grow and share my thoughts and experiences living in Markham. The expectations of all of the communities involved, are that when both the Anti-Black Racism plan

and the Diversity Action Plan are finally developed they will be viewed as living documents in which the communities will see the key elements of these discussions implemented to create a stronger and safer Markham for all its residents.

Thank you.