
Subject:

FW: Written submission - Council Meeting 26 April - Diversity Action Plan

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To: Clerks Public <clerkspublic@markham.ca>

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To Members of Council:

I am writing in support of Council approving the City of Markham Diversity and Anti-Black Racism Action Plans.

Promoting inclusive diversity and eliminating anti-Black racism are crucial in Markham's continued growth as a preferred place to live, work, study, conduct business, and play. The city's prosperity is maximized only when everyone can feel welcome and accepted as valued community members. The Action Plans, developed with extensive grassroots-level input from Markham residents, outline concrete measures for realizing inclusive diversity as a daily reality for everyone in Markham.

Anchoring the Action Plans in the City's strategic plan "Building Markham's Future Together (2020-2023)" reflects the important insight that inclusive diversity and elimination of anti-Black racism should be demonstrated in everything done by the City. They should be integral considerations in all policies, procedures, practices and interactions of municipal government, as part of the fundamental character of the City of Markham.

In order to be a source of strength for the community, diversity must go beyond celebration, food, song and dance; it must also include justice, equity, mutual allyship and respectful dialogue. The Key Shared Values and Guiding Principles in the Diversity Action Plan (pages 11 - 13) accurately describe the contemporary elements for Markham to build and maintain an inclusively diverse social framework. For example, the recognition of intersectionality and the necessity of disaggregated data highlight the internal diversity among members within each diverse group; inclusion, therefore, can only be accomplished through pursuing equity and conscientious allyship.

Policy-level decision-making by the City must, as a result, always incorporate open-participation, grassroots-level consultations in addition to seeking input/feedback from community groups. It is imperative that the City and Council consistently make effort to understand all diverse voices at the grassroots level.

Markham's Plan to Eliminate Anti-Black Racism notes that 55% of Black community members surveyed disagree or strongly disagree with the statement "other communities are allies of the Black community" (page 26). This disappointing observation accords with anecdotal voices heard from Markham's Black community over the years; it shows that ethnic diversity and anti-Black racism cannot be assumed as mutually exclusive by default and can indeed co-exist in the absence of deliberate action. This further underscores that superficial, skin-deep "diversity" does not deserve to be considered a "strength".

Therefore, measures to combat anti-Black racism in Markham must speak to all non-Black residents. Just as the City already propagates various public service information in multiple languages in order to reach all ethnic/linguistic

communities in Markham, public educational campaigns against anti-Black racism must also be conducted in multiple languages. Such campaigns must also specifically address anti-Black racism, instead of racism in general terms.

Having served as Chair of Markham's Race Relations Committee from October 2018 to April 2021, I recall the grassroots community-level protest voices and actions that called for the updating of the Diversity Action Plan and the creation of the Plan to Eliminate Anti-Black Racism. In its meeting on 29 June 2020, the Race Relations Committee endorsed a resolution providing advice to Council on Anti Racism, including Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Indigenous Racism. In my opinion, the City of Markham Diversity and Anti-Black Racism Action Plans being considered by Council today adequately addresses all concerns mentioned in the Race Relations Committee's resolution.

Therefore, I ask that Council approve these two Action Plans and authorize all necessary resources for their full implementation.

Thank you.

Andrew Yu