



**MEETING OF THE RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE FOR THE
CITY OF MARKHAM**

**Ontario Room, Markham Civic Centre
September 16, 2013, 7:00pm**

MINUTES

Attendance: <u>Committee</u> Darius Sookram, Chair Astra Josie Rose, Vice Chair Moises Calo Carla Crooks Bobbie France Vilvan Gunasingham Barbara Tate <u>Council</u> Councillor Logan Kanapathi <u>Guest</u> Mithra Vijendran <u>Staff</u> Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist Bev Shugg Barbeito, Committee Secretary	<u>Regrets</u> Saad Omar Khan Rina George-Alexander Si Ming (Steven) Lu Ramon Solis Councillor Alan Ho Regional Councillor Joe Li Sharon Laing, Director of Human Resources
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1. CHAIR OPENING REMARKS

The Race Relations Committee convened at 7:10 pm with Darius Sookram presiding as Chair. He welcomed all members and hoped that they were as excited as he to work towards making positive change in our communities.

2. CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes or additions made to the agenda.

**3. MINUTES OF THE MARKHAM RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON MAY 6, 2013
AND ON JUNE 3, 2013.**

It was questioned which committee members have reached the end of their terms and what the rules are relating to recruitment of new members. The Committee Secretary will request this information from Markham's Committee Coordinator.

It was

Moved by: Moises Calo
Seconded by: Barbara Tate

That the minutes of the Town of Markham Race Relations Committee Meeting held on May 6, 2013 be adopted as distributed, and the minutes of the Town of Markham Race Relations Committee Meeting held on June 3, 2013 be adopted with the following changes *in italics*:

CHAIR OPENING REMARKS

The Race Relations Committee convened at 7:20 pm with Darius Sookram presiding as Chair. He announced that Liliana Soengas had resigned and that, *some committee members have reached the end of their terms*. Markham will be recruiting for new members and it was recommended that Committee members encourage anyone who might be interested to apply. *The Committee Secretary will request information from Markham's Committee Coordinator about which members' terms will expire soon, as well as about the rules relating to recruitment of new members.*

Carried

4. MANY FACES OF MARKHAM

It was agreed that the Race Relations Committee will coordinate the 2014 Many Faces of Markham event. It will be important to form a sub-committee and appoint a Chair of the sub-committee very soon in order to begin the liaison process with schools so as to increase participation.

Chair Darius Sookram reviewed possible themes, that had been discussed during the June meeting, which would align with Markham initiatives and link the theme of diversity to:

- environmental issues
- healthy living e.g. different cultures
- a garden theme e.g. growing our gardens
- the Winter Olympics in February 2014 in Sochi Russia
- civic action/participation (since 2014 is an election year), creating opportunities for children's voices at a young age

It was suggested that selecting a child as the keynote speaker might be advantageous; this could be incorporated into the selection process. Cheryl McConney-Wilson will confirm the availability of the venue. The Committee will continue discussion on the theme and planning the event at its October meeting.

5. RACE RELATIONS BUSINESS

A. Race Relations Committee Work Plan 2013

Chair Darius Sookram advised that the Race Relations Committee Work Plan 2013 will be updated to include planning for the 2014 Many Faces of Markham event and the committee's name change. Discussion about the work plan will take place at the October meeting.

B. CMARD update; Open: 3Q10

Ms. Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist, reported that there were no new updates. She advised that the Committee is already undertaking many CMARD activities and anti-racism activities; she wondered whether there were others, such as activities relating collaboration with aboriginal groups or engaging youth, that the Committee might wish to consider. Committee discussion included these points:

- The Committee needs to define what it wants to accomplish, including acting as an advisory group to Markham Council
- The Committee will have more positive results when the group works together
- CMARD is a toolkit which serves as a guide for Race Relations Committee actions; within this toolkit, is it now time for the Committee to do more?
- The possibility of holding a CMARD conference in Markham to learn tips that can be put to use.

Chair Darius Sookram advised he will circulate the CMARD document for review. Cheryl McConney-Wilson suggested DiverseCity onBoard and Cities of Migration as two websites that offer innovative ideas that address inclusion and bring cities together.

For further discussion at the October meeting, it was agreed that information required to host a CMARD conference in Markham will be gathered and related to the CMARD toolkit, as follows:

Resources	Astra Josie Rose/Carla Crooks
Structure	Vilvan Gunasingham Carla Crooks

6. MARKHAM HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Ms. Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Diversity Specialist, reported that, on June 19, the Maytree Foundation hosted DiverseCity onBoard to celebrate the winners, including Markham, of this year's Diversity in Governance Awards. The awards recognize leading organizations in the public and non-profit sectors which embrace board diversity and make it a priority to recruit board members from diverse backgrounds.

Ms. McConney-Wilson reported that Markham staff continues to work on preparing a document summarizing statistics relating to the City's demographics, culture, mother tongue, religion and other categories; it will be sent to Committee members when it has been completed.

7. YORK REGION POVERTY ARTICLE

At the December 2013 meeting, it was reported that almost 15% of York Region's children live in poverty and that there might be a link between poverty and racial minorities in York Region. At a subsequent meeting, a speaker made a presentation to the Committee about hidden poverty in York Region. Committee members found this to be disturbing; discussion focussed on what action they might take to make a difference, including:

- Encouraging Markham Council to examine the issue
- Join with other committees, e.g. Seniors, Youth, and Accessibility
- Find opportunities e.g. having a proportion of tickets to events available free or at subsidized prices, or having event proceeds donated to a specific cause

8. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Information Sharing

Chair Darius Sookram encouraged Committee members to share ideas and articles.

Committee members mentioned recent news about the crowning of Miss America 2014 Nina Davuluri, the first woman of Indian descent to win the pageant. She has been referred to as "the Arab" and "Miss 7-11". Some comments mentioned ties to al-Qaeda and called her a terrorist. However, it is encouraging that the Miss America organization has embraced diversity.

Another news story involved the America's Got Talent opera trio "Forte", which competed in the finals of the show. The trio originally consisted of three tenors: Fernando Varela from Puerto Rico, Hana Ryu from South Korea, and Josh Page from New York. The trio met on the internet just a few weeks before their America's Got Talent audition and had never performed together in front of an audience. Hana eventually left the group (due to issues with his visa); he was replaced by another tenor named Sean Panikkar. This too is encouraging that there is no barrier to many races performing and achieving success together.

B. Name Discussion

Chair Darius Sookram reviewed the discussion that took place at the June meeting about whether to include the word "race" in the name or in the mandate of the Committee. Some Committee members expressed the opinion that the word "race" does not truly define the scope of the Committee's mandate. Darius Sookram also reminded the Committee about two potential names for consideration at this meeting:

- Committee for All Races and Ethnicities (CARE) - We CARE about you
- Inclusion and Cultural Diversity Committee (ICDC)

Committee members were not in favour of either proposed name; therefore, Chair Darius Sookram agreed to lead another discussion about possible names at the October meeting.

C. Human Rights presentation

Vilvan Gunasingham requested that Dushahi Sribavan, a Tamil lawyer, be invited to make a presentation to the Committee about the top three human rights issues in the province of Ontario with statistical data specific to Markham/York region on racism and discrimination cases or concerns from the community. The Committee agreed to invite Ms. Sribavan to make a presentation at the October meeting.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Race Relations Committee is scheduled for October 7, 2013 at 7:00 PM.

10. ADJOURNMENT

It was

Moved by Vilvan Gunasingham
Seconded by Astra Josie Rose

That the Race Relations Committee adjourn at 8:30 PM.

Carried