



Report to: General Committee

Date Report Authored: November 28, 2012

SUBJECT: Diversity Action Plan – Status Update
PREPARED BY: Cheryl McConney-Wilson, Senior Diversity Specialist

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report entitled “Diversity Action Plan- Status Update” be received as information;
- 2) That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Council on the status of the implementation of the Diversity Action Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The Diversity Action Plan entitled “Everyone Welcome” was approved by Council in June 2010 and launched in July 2010. It is a multi-year plan that has initiatives identified up until 2019 in the form of 68 recommendations. The Diversity Action Plan was developed through a comprehensive community consultation process involving more than 200 community groups as well as internal departments. The implementation of each of the recommendations has been assigned to lead and supporting departments throughout the City. As directed by Council, staff was requested to provide an annual update on the implementation of the Plan.

The Diversity Action Plan incorporates feedback from the consultation process, highlights Markham’s history including Aboriginal Peoples, settlers and immigrants, and shares many personal stories of Markham. Four communities of focus are identified: youth, seniors, new immigrants / visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. The theme of inclusion and belonging are woven throughout the Plan.

Six over-arching objectives represent the 68 recommendations and the theme of inclusion. They are listed below:

1. Voices for all- strengthened community engagement and partnerships
2. Access for all- promoting barrier free services
3. Places for all- consideration of the environment and sustainability in planning
4. A livelihood for all- employment
5. Communications
6. Building internal capability

OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:

The Diversity Action Plan was developed using principles from Ontario Healthy Communities which identifies inclusion as one of the key determinants of a healthy community. The Diversity Action Plan is the City's plan to make Markham work for everyone, to ensure that everyone feels they belong.

The Diversity Action Plan is an example of cultural transformation at the City and all departments have primary or supporting roles with respect to the Plan's implementation.

Over 66% (45/68) of the Diversity Action Plan recommendations are underway, 24% (16/68) are complete, and the balance are scheduled to be implemented during the 2015 to 2019 timeframe. It should be noted that many of the recommendations are longer term initiatives that will continue to evolve over time. The Diversity Action Plan Tracking Report (Attachment A) provides specific information about the status of each of the recommendations. This tracking report allows members of the Implementation Team to communicate the progress of each of the recommendations and is a tool for staff in the development of their annual work plans.

The Diversity Action Plan has positioned the City of Markham as a thought leader on the topics of diversity and inclusion. The City regularly receives requests for consultation and to speak. For example, Maytree Foundation, a recognized advocate for inclusion, recommended that Markham be the municipality to speak about diversity and inclusion at the October 2012 Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference.

Key Accomplishments

There are a number of key actions that have been taken since the Diversity Action Plan was approved in June 2010 and these actions are becoming embedded in the City's everyday business. Following are some examples of the key actions taken, categorized by each of the six over-arching objectives.

- **Voices for All**

- There are a number of **partnerships** that have been developed to enhance programming, outreach and communications to seniors, youth, new immigrants, and persons with disabilities. Some of these partnerships include: Social Services Network (South Asian Seniors), CHATS (Chinese seniors), the Victorian Order of Nurses, Immigration Canada (Museum new immigrant youth mentorship program has 39 participants since 2011), Welcome Centres (employment workshops, and initiative relating to Aquatics employment and training opportunities), York Region District School Board (Healthy Schools partnership with 17 schools), Fairchild Radio (promotion of fire safety in Cantonese on a monthly basis), Markham Youth Councils (support youth programming at each of the major community centres).

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- There are a number of **community engagement** initiatives that have been developed or expanded to reach out to the community including the Library's Settlement Partners, the Library's multi-lingual library resources and book clubs (Hindi and Cantonese), Theatre programming relevant to culture and diverse ages, dedicated Library teen space and Teen Specialists, an expanded Youth Week working with Recreation, Fire's CADET program for students with developmental delays, an Accessibility Fair, and the availability of Camp Inclusion Counsellors to support children with disabilities at camp. The City, and Culture in particular, use social media in their external promotions. Fire's Seniors Ambassadors program was created in 2012 to develop seniors into Community Fire & Emergency Preparedness Ambassadors (30 participants thus far).
 - The City is a member municipality of the **Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD)** and recognizes that solutions to anti-racism will require change over a period of time. Markham has advanced its commitment through its annual event, The Many Faces of Markham, which commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Markham hosted a Diversity Media event in 2012 in response to concerns about racism in the media. As well, Markham specifically was asked to contribute to the CMARD Toolkit which highlights events from member municipalities. Through ongoing partnership with the York Regional Police, Markham employees can attend Places of Worship Tours to increase their knowledge and understanding of the religious diversity of Markham and York Region.
- **Access for all**
 - The City has met or exceeded the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) accessibility guidelines **improving access** through building retrofits including the Council Chambers, Civic Centre and various community centres.
 - In addition, there is reduced pricing for three Theatre matinees for Seniors per year, free admission to the Varley Gallery on specific days, interpretation services (Contact Centre multi-lingual staff, the language line, list of staff interpreters), a number of service enhancements (on-line service through the portal, expanded Civic Centre counter hours), and portal accessibility enhancements (Google translate, text size and contrast options, with additional accessibility enhancements expected in early 2013).
 - 11% of the Library's print and audio-visual collection is multi-lingual.
 - Recreation is working with the Markham Accessibility Advisory Committee to expand programming for persons with disabilities.
 - The **new Cornell community Centre** has a number of features which support the objective of access for all including a rehearsal hall that holds 200 seats for community-based performance groups, a therapeutic pool, a multi-sensory room for adults and children with varying needs such as autism and cognitive impairments, and joint wellness programming with Markham Stouffville

Hospital.

- **Places for all**

- The **draft Official Plan** provides for a broader variety of housing types and sizes, and advocates for complete communities and transit oriented development.
- The City partnered with York Region in the development of food guides that provide sources for South Asian and Asian foods.
- Ongoing park design based on universal design guidelines to ensure that the broadest possible needs are met.

- **A Livelihood for all**

- Economic Development leads and hosts a number of delegations to highlight Markham as a business destination and to attract employment opportunities. Economic Development also makes presentations to high school students to start a summer company and has student business plan competitions.
- Partnerships are in place with the Welcome Centres to conduct or participate in employment related workshops for new immigrants. Recreation is working with the Welcome Centres with respect to Aquatics training and employment opportunities. And, Human Resources has placed a listing of local employment resources on the City's employment website (on the portal) to assist residents with their job search in 2012.
- The City has a strong partnership in place with the Career Edge organization to create internships opportunities for more than 50 internationally trained professionals, new graduates and persons with disabilities.
- The Engineering Department partnered with Toronto Region Immigration Employment Council (TRIEC) to mentor internationally trained engineering professionals.
- All external City job postings are posted through Equitek which sends the postings to more than 1100 agencies representing all four designated groups as well as internationally trained professionals.
- The City uses World Education Services (WES) for equivalency assessments of candidate international credentials.

- **Communications**

- Clear and easy to understand communications approach which encompasses the increasing use of visuals instead of words in communicating to the public.
- Diversity messages are consistently embedded into internal and external communications and speeches.
- Social media is increasingly being used to communicate to the public and a policy was recently developed.
- The City has a variety of language interpretation supports through staff and a language line. Contact Centre staff speak Cantonese, Mandarin, Tamil Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi, Italian, French, Sign Language and Macedonian. In October 2012, the Contact Centre received 51 requests for translation to

Cantonese, 23 to Mandarin and 13 to Tamil. More than 90 volunteer staff interpreters speak more than 33 languages.

- The City is using radio and print media in languages other than English to communicate key messages and programming.

- **Building internal capability**

- Training has been rolled out in the areas of Respect in the Workplace (2011), Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act (AODA) customer service training (ongoing since 2011), and a leadership diversity workshop (2012).
- A diversity resource site on the Intranet was developed for staff in 2010.
- Partnership with York Regional Police allows employees to increase their knowledge and understanding of the religious diversity in Markham and York Region through the Places of Worship Tour.
- A “quiet room” is in place in the Civic Centre.

Key Planned Actions to 2014

- The development of a Recreation program pricing strategy with a subsidy component.
- The development of a strategy to use social media to reach out to all with a specific focus on youth.
- A community engagement component to the organization’s communications strategy will be developed.
- A Diversity Action Plan update will be provided to the original community group stakeholders involved in the 2009/10 consultation process.
- The development of a civic engagement program about municipalities and Markham specifically for new immigrants and others, working in partnership with the Welcome Centres.
- The development of an employment program for persons with disabilities.
- The delivery of staff diversity training with a customer service focus as well as the delivery of diversity related lunch and learn series.
- The development of an Inclusive Play Space policy based on universal design principles.
- The roll out of plain language guidelines to ensure easy to understand communication.
- A Fire radio show for Tamil language speakers.
- The implementation of Theatre building accessibility improvements.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

Not applicable

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable


ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This initiative aligns with the Integrated Leisure Master Plan, the Green Print, the Growth Plan, the Transportation Plan and the Culture Plan

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

The Diversity Action Plan is a strategic priority impacting the entire organization. As such, all departments are affected. Members of the Diversity Action Plan Implementation Team with lead responsibilities include: Asset Management, Communications, Culture, Economic Development, Fire, Human Resources, Legislative Services (and the Contact Centre), Library, Planning, Recreation, Sustainability (and Accessibility),

RECOMMENDED BY:

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Sharon Laing
Director, Human Resources

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Andy Taylor
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A- Diversity Action Plan- Status Report

ACCESS

8	Identify and incorporate the needs of newcomers and visible minorities, seniors, youth and persons with disabilities into Markham's customer services strategy	Contact Centre (Cross Commission)	X	X	ALL	X	X	GET DATE FROM PAUL WEALLEANS	X	Staff diversity training will have staff apply diversity concepts and skills to a variety of customer service scenarios in 2013. DF Customer Satisfaction Sub Committee in place. Contact Centre has own service standards where 70% of calls answered in 30 seconds and has extended hours to 7 pm to promote access. Language line available and many languages spoken by staff. Oct 2012 report indicated XXXX requests for translation in Cantonese, Mandarin, Tamil.	Access
9	Develop clear language guidelines for all forms of Markham's communications including but not limited to the website, program publicity, and public policies	Corporate Communications and Community Engagement	X	X	ALL	X	X	March 2011	X	Clear email language and guidelines are posted on Intranet and relate to all forms of communications. Evolving to use of visuals where possible to increase successful communications.	Access; Communications
14	Develop a pricing strategy that will include a balance of no cost/low cost programs and services that are accessible to all residents	Recreation (Library, Culture, Finance, Corporate Communications)	X	X	ALL	X	X	2013	X	The project is divided into 4 phases: Background Research; Strategy Development & Implementation; Public Consultation; and Subsidy Strategy. The Background Research Report is complete. The staff team was a cross section of individuals from the organization. Team reached out to colleagues in other municipalities (such as Richmond Hill, Toronto, London, Vaughn, Mississauga) for comparative purposes.	Access

15	Undertake to ensure frequently used Markham facilities meet provincial accessibility requirements	Asset Management	X		PW D, S	X	2011		X	2012- installing hand rail in Council Chambers. 2011- Markham Civic Centre- new automatic door operators with ingress'r ??? type activation devices as well as new larger push buttons were installed throughout the facility; upgrades to the exterior universal washrooms to better accommodate the needs of persons with various abilities; new handrail extensions and visual aid enhancements were installed at interior stairs to meet the current Ontario Building Code requirements (including installation of non-slip, colour contrasting nosing strips and colour contrasting paint applied to wall mounted handrails); reworked several existing service counters to better accommodate the needs of persons using mobility devices; new grab bars and back rests were installed where required in public washrooms; new hands free faucets and flush controls were installed in public washroom locations that accommodate a universal design approach. Universal design approach is to meet the needs of as many people as possible. Milliken Mills Community Centre; Provisions for a new universal washroom with motorized adult change table to better accommodate the needs of persons with various abilities. Enhancements to the universal pool area	Access
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16	Promote the availability of Markham staff that can offer help in key newcomer languages; increase the means to communicate with the hearing impaired; enhance and promote the use of Markham's existing multi-language Line	Communications (Accessibility and Human Resources)	X							ALL	X	X	X	2014			X	2012- Articles being drafted by HR and Communications about the City's interpreters. Research has indicated that the hearing impaired, hard of hearing and deaf communities appreciate face to face and email which reduces the no need to purchase tools such as TTY which are considered to be antiquated in the community; Communications has worked with HR to draft interview questions to highlight our internal translators. Contact Centre has multi-lingual staff and uses a language line. List of staff interpreters is posted on Intranet.	Communications; Access
3	17 Develop a corporate policy on making Markham information and applications available in multiple formats	Accessibility Office (Communications)	X	X						ALL	X	X	X	2015			X	As per the requirements of the accessible customer service regulation, alternate formats are available upon request (2 requests have been responded to thus far). The service level is to respond within 48 hours. A policy on language will be developed by 2015.	Communications; Access

25	Develop a well-researched understanding of how to find and engage isolated individuals in the community	Community Services, Fire Services, Recreation, (Library)	X	X	ALL	X	X	2012; ongoing activity		X	Recreation and Fire continue to do outreach to inform individuals about services. Fire has an established a partnership with Fairchild Radio where they promote fire safety in Cantonese. In 2013 Recreation will be developing neighbourhood plans to identify gaps in services and to gain an understanding on who participates in our existing services at a neighbourhood level. This may assist with finding isolated individuals. Seniors and Youth programs see # 27,28 29- Library will initiate new outreach librarians to support community outreach.	Community engagement and partnership; Access
27	Seek out volunteers who speak the languages of newcomer communities and ask them to assist in delivering programs to newcomer seniors	Recreation	X		NI, S		X	Ongoing activity		X	Seniors from Armadale and Milliken work with MOTM and assist when needed in communicating in languages other than English, Seniors who convene the programs are providing their own translation to support newcomers and new members in the club	Community engagement and partnership; Access
28	Inform seniors about subsidies they are entitled to by bringing forms or applications to them instead of asking seniors to figure it all out for themselves	Recreation	X		S		X	Ongoing activity		X	Pricing strategy will determine the level of subsidies available and then Recreation will design a process to inform Seniors specifically. Currently, Seniors discounts are promoted through Markham Life. Fee assistance is available for programs offered by the City for those that meet the financial difficulty and are provided with fee assistance equivalent to 25% to 75%.	Access

29	Promote programs that allow seniors to stay in the community	Recreation	X			S	X		2011; ongoing activity				X	More than 2,000 Seniors participate on a weekly basis across City's community centres. Program information is marketed through Markham Life and to many social service agencies. In partnership with Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) offering a training program SMART (Seniors Maintaining Active Roles Together) for individuals to be trained in a 12 week program to help seniors stay active, healthy and independent by helping them exercise in their own Home.	Access
34	Promote Markham's Language Line to newly arrived youth	Recreation	X			Y	X		Ongoing activity			X		The Contact Centre houses the language line which is promoted through various Markham communications and departments. As Communications develops their youth strategy, promoting language line will be included	Communications; Access
38	Increase the number of programs and workshops held in neighbourhood schools to decrease the need for youth to pay for transportation to get to programs	Recreation	X			Y	X		Ongoing activity			X		2012- Due to teachers' negotiations needed to decrease number of opportunities for leadership programs. When teachers reach agreement, City staff ready to proceed with programs. Transportation costs not reduced for this year however, once work to rule ends, programming will start and opportunity for transportation support will be available.	Access
39	Provide free youth leadership training for low income youth, while reducing barriers, while increasing employment opportunities	Recreation	X			Y	X		Ongoing activity			X		New Youth Leadership Community program begins December 2012, highlighting City summer employment opportunities and leadership training, specifying courses need to take.	Access
60	Ensure that the design of all improvements to Markham buildings and parks address the needs of persons with disabilities	Development Services, CAO, Accessibility, Operations,	X			ALL		X	2013; ongoing activity			X		Markham supports "universal design principles," (designing products so they are usable by the broadest possible audience) and reviews our parks based on established (industry standard) criteria. An Inclusive Playspace Policy is in development with support from DSC, CAO, Accessibility, Operations.	Access

62	Assess all our programs, services and delivery methods with the help of the Accessibility Committee	Communications, Library (Recreation)	X	X		PW D,S	X	X	Ongoing activity		X	The Accessibility Committee is consulted where necessary, about upgrades, services and delivery methods. The Accessibility Committee's role is to advise staff and Council on implementation of the Ontario Access to Information Act, 2001 and Access to Information Act, 2005, as well as overall accessibility implementation in the city.	Access
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63	Design and establish accessibility features on the website	Communications	X			PW D,S			2013; ongoing activity		X	2011- the portal has use of text size and contrast options, Google Translate, use of videos, audio streaming In early 2013, further accessibility software will be adopted.	Access
64	Acquire funding to buy additional Kurzweil units for all library services	Library		X		PW D	X		2012		X	Units purchased for 5 large branches; currently waiting for delivery/installation at Thornhill Village.	Access
68	Exploring developing accessible interactive maps	Accessibility Office	X	X		PW D	X	X		X?		Future planning	Access