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**Item No. 8**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**July 11, 2023**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** May 25, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Anti Black Racism Strategy Information Report

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

June 8, 2021 Regional Council motion (Item No. 11.1.10):

MOVED by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse the Anti-Black Racism Framework, as set out in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated April 6, 2021, which will guide the development of a strategy and action plan; and
2. Request that the Chief Administrative Officer provide annual updates to Regional Council on the progress of the plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

#### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, SNS 2008, c. 39:*

#### **Purpose of Act**

**2** The purpose of this Act is to (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it; (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and (c) recognize the purposes of the Municipality set out in Section 7A.

#### **Purposes of the Municipality**

**7A** The purposes of the Municipality are to (a) provide good government; (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

Regional Council has expressed a desire to address anti-Black racism with the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and the community at large. In response to the July 21, 2020, Regional Council motion asking staff to develop an anti-Black racism action plan, an Information Report dated November 30, 2020, with an attached Project Charter, was presented to Regional Council in December 2020. The Project Charter will guide the leadership and the coordination of efforts towards the development of an Anti-Black Racism (ABR) Strategy and Action Plan.

The 2021-2025 Council priority outcome of inclusive communities where “residents are empowered as stewards and advocates for their communities, and work with the municipality and others to remove systemic barriers” can only become a reality for the Black community if the Halifax Regional Municipality remains committed to addressing anti-Black racism within its structure.

In Halifax Regional Municipality, the impacts of anti-Black racism have been brought to light in instances of negative interactions with communities of African descent including: the relocation of the community of Africville, a variety of human rights complaints, and the Wortley report on street checks. In addition to these instances at a corporate level, anti-Black racism remains an everyday reality, with detrimental effects for individuals of African descent within the organization. Over the past years, HRM has renewed its commitment to addressing anti-Black racism through various initiatives and renewed efforts to address anti-Black racism internally and externally.

Halifax Regional Municipality recognizes that discrimination and systemic barriers are present in all facets of society; our organization is not immune to the variety of forms that discrimination takes within our communities and beyond. As an organization, HRM acknowledges the unique and nuanced impacts of anti-Black racism (ABR) as a specific form of racism which is experienced by Black people and people of African descent, across the world. Anti-Black racism is a specific form of racism which reinforces attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and other forms of discrimination directed towards Black people which are rooted in the legacy of enslavement and colonization.

## **DISCUSSION**

This report updates regional council on the status of the Anti-Black Racism Plan and outlines key activities of the Anti-Black Racism Strategy from April 2022 to March 2023, stemming from Council’s priority and commitment to addressing Anti-Black Racism (ABR), in recognition and acknowledgement of the systemic implications of ABR on HRM communities, as well as within the organization.

In order to develop a comprehensive ABR plan, the ANSAIO team focused on developing and implementing a community engagement strategy. This included significant engagement with the African Nova Scotian, African descent communities to get their input on what a good municipal plan should include. Based on the feedback from the community and internal consultation actions have been identified to address these issues it is expected that the plan will be finalized and presented to regional council Q2/2023. Listed below are key activities that have been undertaken over the past year.

Where the Project Charter is guiding the leadership and the coordination of efforts towards the development of an Anti-Black Racism (ABR) Strategy and Action Plan, some key objects are being addressed under the following ABR updates:

### **1. Corporate Anti-Black Racism Training**

Anti-Black racism training has been developed and to date has been piloted twice with adjustments still taking place with the intent that training will be officially launched and available across the organization by late 2023 or early 2024.

**2. ABR Grants Program**

The Anti-Black racism grants program has been developed and will be going before Regional Council later this year. The objective of the grants program is to increase ANS community capacity to address Anti-Black Racism through grassroots projects and initiatives. Applicants must explain/demonstrate how their project will align with at least one of the identified council priorities while also ensuring that this work tackles issues related to ABR throughout Halifax Regional Municipality. Applicants must also demonstrate how the project aligns with at least one of the corporate goals around Anti-Black Racism.

**3. ABR Resource/Library**

The ABR Coordinator identified a growing list of valuable materials including books, essays, movies, articles, videos, & podcasts that can be utilized by employees in their learning journey to better understand Anti-Black Racism. The materials are available through the D&I/ ANSAIO office and internal intranet.

**4. Anti-Black Racism Leadership Conference**

The African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office hosted the Inaugural Anti-Black Racism Leadership Conference in March 2023 at the Halifax Forum with close to 300 attendees. This conference unpacked what it means to lead by example and to be an inclusive and Anti-racist municipality. Through keynote presentations, spoken word performances, and a Black merchant's market, participants will have the opportunity to look through an Afrocentric lens and leave with a clear understanding on what tangible actions we all can take to shift the culture across our organization.

**5. Anti-Black Racism Employee Video**

As part of a way to increase awareness and understanding a video featuring Black employees from across the organization was created. This featured collective voices from varying levels. Participants shared in their own words why the work underway across the organization was so critically important. The video was shared during the ABR Leadership Conference and has since been shared on the internal intranet and will be used as a learning and awareness resource within Business Units moving forward.

**6. Anti-Black Racism Education Series**

The ABR education series was developed and is vital for the organization as we work towards addressing Anti-Black Racism. The ABR education series supports this initiative and provides continued learning opportunities for employees. Workshop series offered and provided an in-depth look into issues related to ABR. The desired outcome was that employees gain a better understanding of how they can be in a position of support to aid in combating Anti-Black Racism. Subject matter experts provided practical and proven lessons, suggestions and solutions that can be applied in the workplace and the community. The series began in January 2022 and were virtual utilizing Microsoft Teams. The following topics were covered and are still available on the HRM HUB for all employees: Unpacking Anti-Black Racism-The History of African Nova Scotians as told by us, Black Mental Health, White Privilege & Systemic Racism/Allyship, Journeying through the valleys of anti-Black racism to holistic wellness, Black Health Equity & why Equity, Diversity & Inclusion is just not enough, and most recently in February 2023 we had a session titled Beyond Djembe and Libation: A Call to Real Action Against anti-Black racism . Education and learning opportunities will be ongoing. The ANSAIO team have been receiving boundless positive feedback from employees at all levels across the organization as a result of these learning opportunities.

**7. African Descent Advisory Committee**

Recruitment has taken place for the African Descent Advisory Committee (ADAC); which will focus on engagement practices and service delivery to communities of African descent; consisting of membership from across the Black communities, who will serve to advise the municipality on the impact of municipal policies, programs, and services on the Black community. The committee

gathered for the first time June 19, 2023, for an orientation session and will re-convene with a regular meeting in September 2023.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Anti-Black Racism initiatives highlighted in this report are included in the approved Diversity & Inclusion /ANSAIO budgets.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement is imbedded in the ongoing Anti-Black Racism work. Engagement will be on-going.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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