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Item No. 7
Halifax Regional Council
July 9, 2024

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

FROM: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: June 12, 2024

SUBJECT: Anti-Black Racism Update 2024

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

BACKGROUND

In the 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 01, 2023, to April 01, 2024, 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.

Listed below are key activities that have been undertaken over the past year.

1. Launched Anti-Black Racism Corporate Training:

This year, we successfully launched an extensive anti-Black racism corporate training program. This initiative was designed to educate our employees at all levels about the systemic issues of racism and equip them with the knowledge and tools to actively contribute to a more inclusive workplace. The training has been well-received, with high participation rates and positive feedback indicating increased awareness and sensitivity towards anti-Black racism.

2. Ongoing Education Series:

In addition to the corporate training, we have initiated an ongoing education series that delves deeper into various aspects of anti-Black racism. These sessions are held virtually throughout the year and cover a wide range of topics, including Unpacking Anti-Black racism, Inequities in Healthcare, The History of Black people in this City and Province, White Privilege, Systemic Racism Allyship, The Impact that anti-Black racism has on the Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Black Community. These are just a few of the sessions that we have had thus far, and we will continue sharing these sessions with all employees and fostering continuous learning and dialogue.

3. Hosted Two Anti-Black Racism Conferences:

This year, we hosted two major conferences focused on anti-Black racism. The first conference was targeted at leaders, providing them with the insights and strategies needed to lead anti-racism efforts within our organization. The second conference was designed for employees at all levels, offering practical strategies and education to empower them to be change agents in their respective roles. Both conferences saw robust attendance and engagement, highlighting a strong commitment to addressing anti-Black racism at all levels.

4. African Descent Advisory Committee:

We have established the African Descent Advisory Committee, a vital step in ensuring that the voices and perspectives of the Black community are heard in the decision-making processes of our city. This committee is tasked with bringing an Afrocentric lens to review city programs and services, ensuring they are inclusive and equitable for Black residents.

5. Launching the Anti-Black Racism Grants Program:

To support grassroots initiatives and projects that address anti-Black racism, we are excited to launch the Anti-Black Racism Grants Program in August 2024. In April 2024, Regional Council approved the anti-Black racism grants program. This program will provide funding to community organizations and individuals who are working towards creating positive change and addressing systemic inequalities.

This initiative represents our city's unwavering commitment to combating anti-Black racism and promoting equality. We acknowledge that this is an ongoing journey and remain dedicated to making continuous improvements. We are grateful for the support and collaboration of the community, and we look forward to another year of progress and positive change.

6. Anti-Black Racism Steering Committee & Sub-Committees

The internal ABR Steering Committee continues to advise on and implement the goals of the ABR initiatives across the organization this includes initiatives like the ABR Strategy and Action Plan, African Descent Advisory Committee, ABR Training Development, ABR Awareness Campaign, Community Engagement, Employee Engagement, ABR Grants Program, ABR Conferences. This committee consist of individuals from across the organization from the Executive Leadership level to frontline staff who provide expertise and advice on how to best move our anti-Black racism initiatives.

7. 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 is 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.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of the Anti-Black Racism Plan was included in the approved 2023/24 budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, SNS 2008, c 39

2 The purpose of this Act is to (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respects 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 that the functions of the Municipality are as set out in Section 7A.

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.

34(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies, and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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