



Office of the Commissioner
Community and Health Services Department

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Committee of the Whole

From: Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

Stephen Maio
Senior Executive Officer, People Equity and Culture

Date: May 31, 2023

Re: Inclusion Charter for York Region – Update

This memorandum provides an update to Council on the Inclusion Charter for York Region (Inclusion Charter) since the last update in [November 2021](#). When Regional Council endorsed its Inclusion Charter on [June 28, 2018](#), staff committed to providing regular updates on actions taken and results.

In [November 2021](#), Regional Council received and approved a motion related to Actions to Address Anti-Asian Hate. This memorandum also provides an update on the work of the Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group related to this motion.

York Region is one of the fastest growing and most diverse communities in Canada

According to the [York Region 2021 Census Data Report](#), as of 2021, 1.17 million people call York Region home, speaking over 120 languages, and representing over 230 distinct ethnic origins. In 2021, 68% of York Region residents reported having a religious affiliation, 55% of residents self-identified as a visible minority and almost half of all York Region residents were born outside of Canada.

The Inclusion Charter for York Region is a community initiative that provides a foundation for action and reflects a commitment to welcoming and inclusive communities

In 2016, a group of 20 organizations, including all nine local municipalities, police services, hospitals, school boards, conservation authorities and agencies formed the Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group (Group) to develop the Inclusion Charter. Since the Inclusion Charter was developed, the Group has evolved to focus on exchanging ideas and best practices among member organizations, as well as developing and advancing collective actions to achieve greater impact. York Region co-chairs this Group, along with the York Regional Police, and provides policy and operations supports for the Group's meetings and activities. A list of members is included as Appendix A.

Organizations participating in the Inclusion Charter initiative affirm their commitment to welcoming and inclusive communities where everyone can develop to their full potential, participate freely in society, and live with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination. The Inclusion Charter is designed to be customized by each endorsing organization, incorporating statements that are consistent across all organizations as well as content that is unique to, and supportive of, their circumstances and priorities. Endorsing organizations and their Charters can be found on York.ca's [Diversity and Inclusion webpage](#).

In 2017, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research recognized the Charter as a leading practice model that communities around the world could use to become more inclusive and in 2019 established a partnership with the Region, York University and York Regional Police to foster and support collaborative actions. More information about the journey of the Inclusion Charter initiative in the York Region community, including key milestones that align with and affirm the Charter, is included as Appendix B.

This year is the fifth anniversary of York Region's endorsement of the Inclusion Charter initiative and Regional Council's approval of The Regional Municipality of York's version of the Inclusion Charter

The Inclusion Charter supports the Region's [Vision](#) for strong, caring and safe communities. The [2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan: From Vision to Results](#) affirms York Region's commitment to welcoming and inclusive communities by providing services in ways that are accessible for all. Other York Region Plans align with the Inclusion Charter, such as the framework supporting the development of the [York Region 2023 to 2026 Newcomer Inclusion Plan](#), the [Community Safety and Well-Being Plan for York Region 2022 to 2026](#), and the [York Region 2020 to 2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#). Additionally, the Inclusion Charter aligns with the [York Region Seniors Strategy Refresh](#).

Since endorsing the Inclusion Charter, the Region has advanced many actions including those noted to Council in [October 2019](#) and [November 2021](#).

Recent events continue to underscore the importance of the Inclusion Charter

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated experiences of discrimination, including hate crimes, and exposed societal injustices and inequalities. Evidence provided by the [Ontario Government](#) has shown that racially diverse, newcomer and low-income communities were impacted more significantly by COVID-19 than others. In late 2020, the Province's [High Priority Communities Strategy](#) provided targeted community outreach, and increased testing and wraparound supports to hardest-hit neighbourhoods. The Region engaged with impacted communities to understand the experience of residents and support a more equitable response to York Region residents. Activities that formed the Region's Public Health and Social Services response to COVID-19 Global Pandemic initiatives were regularly provided in updates to Council, including the most recent reports in [April 2022](#) and [May 2022](#).

Additionally, there has been an increase in hate crime occurrences within York Region, with [York Regional Police reporting](#) a 42% increase from 2021 to 2022, rising from 195 to 277 reported occurrences. This compares to a [22% increase from 2020 to 2021](#). Higher numbers of hate crimes targeting race or ethnicity and religion accounted for most of the reported increase from 2021 to 2022.

The Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group is supporting inclusion in the community through collective actions focused on increasing sense of belonging and decreasing incidence of hate crimes

In April 2022, a York Region-specific [Inclusive Language Guide](#) was developed as a collective action of the Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group to support the use of more inclusive and respectful language by staff of the Region and local municipalities, as well as the public. The Inclusive Language Guide includes principles to communicate using inclusive language, covers various inclusive language topics such as age, gender and race, identifies words to avoid and recommends preferred terms to use. Recognizing that language evolves quickly, the Inclusive Language guide will be reviewed and updated regularly.

In 2022, the Group initiated a multi-phased community #EndHateYR campaign focused on hate-related incidents in York Region. The campaign, developed in close collaboration with York Regional Police's Hate Crimes Unit, will provide education and awareness about hate motivated crimes and incidents, the impact on individuals and the community and how community members can work together to eliminate hate and support those impacted.

The first phase of the #EndHateYR campaign includes an [information hub](#) with definitions, information, and resources to help understand, identify and report acts of hate. This phase also includes a communications toolkit for Group member organizations to expand the reach of the campaign. The second phase of the campaign is still under development and is anticipated to incorporate opportunities for individual and organizational actions to help amplify awareness about and tackle hate in our communities.

More information on initiatives of the Group can be found at Appendix C.

York Region remains committed to achieving the vision of the Inclusion Charter within the organization

York Region's corporate commitment to the Inclusion Charter is strengthened by the creation of the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Division in the People, Equity and Culture Branch of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer along with Council's investment in permanent staffing to support and lead this work.

Regional actions include efforts to strengthen Indigenous engagement. In [February 2023](#), Regional Council approved 1 Full-Time Equivalent position to provide support and advice related to Indigenous engagement, and to respond meaningfully to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Since then, staff have consulted with a number of key staff across the organization to inform the role of this resource, and have been working with external Indigenous leaders to prepare an appropriate job description and recruitment process. More information on these activities will be shared with Regional Council in September 2023.

Corporate actions continue to promote inclusion, equity and belonging in the workplace

Since the last update, York Region has continued to implement actions resulting from the [corporate framework for action to address anti-Black racism](#). This includes initiating required Anti-Black Racism training for all management using an e-module and facilitated sessions, informed by the Anti-Black Racism Advisory Group and comprised of staff with lived experience.

Coming out of the corporate framework for action, activities have begun to support an equity audit of all People, Equity and Culture policies and procedures. The audit findings, together with our employee demographic data will be key to identify actions going forward to remove identified barriers and create a more inclusive organization.

To increase a sense of belonging at work, five Communities of Belonging for groups of employees who share common identities and lived experience (i.e., for Black Staff, Indigenous Staff, Staff with Disabilities, Jewish Staff and 2SLGBTQI+ Staff) have been established and activities are underway. In 2022, 13 Corporate diversity lunch and learn celebrations were offered celebrating Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, Jewish Heritage Month, National AccessAbility Week, National Indigenous History Month, Pride Month and Islamic Heritage Month. Since then, celebrations have been expanded to include Latin American Heritage Month and Hindu Heritage Month informed by employee demographic data. The Region also participated in Pride Month activities such as flag-raising at the Paramedics and Seniors Services headquarters, the York Pride Parade and training sessions to raise awareness and educate staff regarding Inclusive Language and 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion.

The corporation revised its Diversity and Inclusion Staff Committee's terms of reference to reflect the purpose to serve as a consultative body for the implementation of IDEA actions coming out of the Inclusion Charter for York Region. This included refreshed membership

including passionate, diverse staff from equity deserving groups and subject matter experts, from across the organization.

Accessible programs, services and facilities remain a priority at York Region

York Region remains committed to making its services accessible to people with disabilities in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. To achieve this goal, the Region redesigned and launched a fully accessible York.ca website in 2022 meeting [World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) Level AA](#) requirements within the AODA. This website improved user experience and removes barriers to ensure that people with disabilities can access the information they need.

The 2019 to 2022 York Region Accessibility Advisory committee provided invaluable advice on accessibility of York Region's programs, services and facilities during its four meetings in 2022, including informing programs and services, such as the York Regional Police Business Plan and York Region's Regional Official Plan.

This past year marked the end of term for the 2019 to 2022 York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee and following extensive recruitment activities, York Region Council appointed members to the 2023 to 2026 York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee.

More information about York Region's inclusion initiatives since the last update can be found in Appendix D.

York Region continues to build on a strong partnership established with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research

York Region's relationship with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research is directly related to the Inclusion Charter. A central component of this relationship is the Memorandum of Understanding between York Region, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, York University and York Regional Police to advance social inclusion and sustainable development.

In March 2023, York Region renewed the agreement between the four parties to continue to work together on expanded thematic areas. This will foster and support collaborative actions to advance the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, promote health and well-being, support economic and social inclusion, and build peaceful and inclusive communities. The Region will leverage the agreement to advance aligned priorities within the organization and within the community.

Inclusion Charter endorsement and support of endorsees is expanding

As of May 2023, 36 organizations have endorsed the Inclusion Charter and work continues to further expand endorsement and support Inclusion Charter endorsees. Endorsing the Inclusion Charter for York Region shows the common commitment of each organization to inclusion in their programs and services. As endorsement expands, so does the collective commitment and reach of actions to help create welcoming and inclusive communities.

York Region, along with its partners, remains committed to the vision of the Inclusion Charter and will update Regional Council as initiatives are implemented.



Stephen Maio
Senior Executive Officer, People Equity and Culture



Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

eDOCS #15120724

Appendix A - Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group Member Organizations
Appendix B - Inclusion Charter Roadmap: Journey in the York Region Community
Appendix C - Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group Initiatives
Appendix D - York Region Corporate Inclusion Initiatives

APPENDIX A

Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group Member Organizations:

1. The Regional Municipality of York
2. York Regional Police
3. Town of Aurora
4. Town of East Gwillimbury
5. Town of Georgina
6. Township of King
7. City of Markham
8. Town of Newmarket
9. City of Richmond Hill
10. City of Vaughan
11. Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville
12. York Region District School Board
13. York Catholic District School Board
14. Oak Valley Health (formerly Markham Stouffville Hospital)
15. Southlake Regional Health Centre
16. Mackenzie Health
17. United Way of Greater Toronto
18. York Region Children's Aid Society
19. Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority
20. Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

INCLUSION ROADMAP: CHARTER Journey in the York Region Community

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

2016

Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group (MDIG) was formed

- Inclusion Charter model was identified by newcomer focused Community Partnership Council as a positive approach to respond to rapidly changing demographics in York Region
- MDIG was formed to develop the Inclusion Charter for York Region through the unique approach of common commitment statement that promotes human rights and accessibility and customized statement created that aligns with mandates, strategies and communities

2018

York Region and Community Partners Endorsed the Inclusion Charter for York Region

- York Region's Council endorsed the Inclusion Charter in June 2018
- York Region's statement aligns with and promotes Council's commitment to inclusion in the community and the workplace
 - Together with other participating organizations, The Regional Municipality of York is committed to taking action to achieve the vision of the Charter in our organization and in the community. The Region celebrates its growing and diverse population as a source of strength, vitality and economic opportunity. The Region's commitment to inclusion enhances our ongoing work to attract and retain the best talent, promote innovation and provide an excellent customer experience

2019

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

- United Nations Institute for Training and Research, York Region, York Regional Police and York University entered into a three-year partnership to work together to promote inclusive communities

All 20 MDIG member organizations endorsed the Inclusion Charter for York Region

- MDIG identified two priority areas increase the sense of community belonging among York Region residents and decrease incidence of hate crimes
- MDIG initiated two collective action campaigns to bring the Inclusion Charter to life: Diversity Calendar and Anti-Hate Campaign

2021

Launch of Diversity Calendar and Centre International de Formation des Acteurs Locaux (CIFAL)

- Launched an online diversity calendar with internationally, nationally and provincially recognized faith dates
- Opening of Canada's first Centre International de Formation des Acteurs Locaux (CIFAL) at York University's Markham Centre Campus, a key outcome of the partnership with UNITAR to serve as a knowledge exchange hub

2022

Launch of Inclusive Language Guide

- To support use of more inclusive and respectful language, MDIG developed an Inclusive Language Guide for York Region.

2023

Launch of Anti-Hate Campaign

- #EndHateYR Campaign Information hub created to educate and provide resources to the community.

Renewal of UNITAR MOU

- Renewal of Memorandum of Understanding between United Nations Institute for Training and Research, York Region, York Regional Police and York University continuing the commitment to advance inclusion

APPENDIX C

Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group Initiatives

The [Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group \(MDIG\)](#) provides a forum for local municipalities and key community organizations to engage in collaborative planning, discuss common needs, and identify possible tools and best practices related to accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

MDIG is committed to the implementation of the Inclusion Charter for York Region and has engaged in implementing collective actions that align with and amplify the vision of the Inclusion Charter.

MDIG Action	Accomplishment	What's next
Inclusion Charter Education and Awareness Campaign	<p>MDIG organizations launched an education and awareness campaign focused on educating MDIG organizations about the Inclusion Charter for York Region, what the collective commitment means and what the Inclusion Charter means to each organization.</p> <p>A toolkit was developed and provided to MDIG organizations to raise awareness about the Inclusion Charter internally through corporate campaigns that fit the mission of their respective organizations.</p>	The toolkit will be updated and shared with all endorsees of the Inclusion Charter.
Diversity Calendar	An electronic diversity calendar was made available to everyone, online , to provide important information about various faith dates and internationally, nationally and provincially recognized dates.	The calendar will be updated annually.
Inclusive Language Guide	<p>Inclusive Language Guide was developed to support the use of more inclusive and respectful language. This online tool is available online.</p> <p>The Guide includes guiding principles to follow to communicate using inclusive language, covers</p>	The Inclusive Language Guide is an evolving document and will be reviewed and revised regularly.

	<p>various inclusive language topics such as age, gender, and race, and recommends preferred terms to use.</p>	
<p>Anti-Hate Campaign</p>	<p>The first phase of this campaign includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An information hub that provides definitions, information and links to organizations where acts of hate can be reported • A communications toolkit for Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group member organizations to enable and support the sharing of web content, newsletter articles, social media posts and digital assets 	<p>The second phase of the campaign is still under development, but it is anticipated it will incorporate opportunities for individual and organizational actions to help amplify awareness of the importance of standing up to hate in our communities.</p>

APPENDIX D

York Region corporate Inclusion Initiatives

York Region's approach to corporate IDEA multi-year work planning is responsive and transformational by ensuring the work is informed by legislated requirements, data (e.g., employee demographic survey), best practice, research and expert feedback from internal stakeholders and findings resulting from the equity audit of People, Equity and Culture policies and practices.

Action	Accomplishment	What's next
Advancing accessible programs, services and facilities in York Region	<p>Achieved compliance with AODA WCAG Level AA requirements</p> <p>Developed and posted annual accessibility status reports (2021, 2022)</p> <p>Recruited and appointed members to the York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee (YRAAC) 2023-2026</p> <p>Supported YRAAC to inform various Regional and York Regional Police programs and services such as transitional housing projects, transportation services and roads, York Regional Police business plan, Regional Official Plan</p> <p>Led professional development for regional and accessibility advisory committees during National AccessAbility Week in 2022</p>	<p>Submission of the 2023 Accessibility (Compliance) Report</p> <p>Consulting and developing of York Region's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023-2027 for Council approval</p> <p>Conducting four YRAAC meetings to seek advice on York Region and York Regional Police programs, services and facilities</p> <p>Celebrating National AccessAbility Week and 20th Anniversary of YRAAC</p> <p>Implementing continuous quality improvement on existing AODA standards and requirements</p>
Leading actions to address anti-Black racism	<p>Finalized training to address anti-Black racism, incorporated feedback from the Anti-Black Racism Advisory Group (ABRAG) and rolled out training to management and staff</p>	<p>Completing training to address anti-Black racism for management and staff</p> <p>Completing the equity audit of People, Equity and Culture policies and practices, and</p>

	<p>Conducted an analysis of the employee demographic survey</p> <p>Initiating an equity audit for People, Equity and Culture policies and procedures</p>	<p>developing actions to address gaps identified in the equity audit and employee demographic survey</p> <p>Developing and providing additional support for Black Staff, such as a Black Mentoring program</p>
<p>Fostering a sense of belonging at work and increased awareness of IDEA</p>	<p>Created five Communities of Belonging for equity-deserving groups, specifically for Black Staff, Indigenous Staff, Staff with Disabilities, Jewish Staff and 2SLGBTQI+ Staff</p> <p>Refreshed the Diversity and Inclusion Staff Committee terms of reference and membership</p> <p>Expanded corporate diversity celebrations in response to employee demographic survey data to include additional celebrations for Latin American Heritage Month and Hindu Heritage Month</p> <p>Corporate participation in Pride Month activities such as flag raising at the Paramedics and Seniors Services headquarters and the York Pride Parade</p> <p>Provided ongoing IDEA education and training for staff on Inclusive Language and 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion</p>	<p>Ongoing participation in Pride Month activities</p> <p>Continuing various workplace initiatives such as corporate diversity celebrations and strengthening the Communities of Belonging</p> <p>Developing IDEA training curriculum/offerings</p> <p>Developing corporate IDEA tools and resources to support staff in ensuring equity and inclusion are reflected in Regional programs and services</p>