



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: October 27, 2021

Report Number: SRCM.21.10

Department: Office of the City Manager
Division: Strategy and Government Relations

Subject: SRCM.21.10 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative and Richmond Hill Land Acknowledgement Statement

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative, undertaken as directed under Council's Strategic Priority of "A Strong Sense of Belonging."

This report also provides the results of research and consultation with indigenous communities on the creation of a Richmond Hill Land Acknowledgement, as directed by Council on July 7, 2021.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Council approve the resolution attached as Appendix 1 to SRCM.21.10 to affirm membership in UNESCO's Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, which reads as follows:

Given that:

1. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is calling on municipalities to join a Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities and to be part of UNESCO's international Coalition launched in 2004; and
2. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) endorses the Call for a Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities and encourages its members to join; and

Whereas:

3. Municipal governments in Canada, along with other levels of government, have responsibilities under Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as federal, provincial and territorial human rights codes, and therefore have an important role to play in combating racism and discrimination and fostering equality and respect for all citizens;

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Be it resolved that:

4. The City of Richmond Hill agrees to join the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities and, in joining the Coalition, endorses the Common Commitments and agrees to develop or adapt its own unique Plan of Action accordingly.
 5. These Common Commitments and the Municipality's unique Plan of Action will be an integral part of the Municipality's vision, strategies and policies.
 6. In developing or adapting and implementing its own unique Plan of Action toward progressive realization of the Common Commitments, the Municipality will cooperate with other organizations and jurisdictions, including other levels of government, Indigenous peoples, public and private sector institutions, and civil society organizations, all of whom have responsibilities in the area of human rights.
 7. The Municipality will set its priorities, actions and timelines and allocate resources according to its unique circumstances, and within its means and jurisdiction. The Municipality will exchange its expertise and share best practices with other municipalities involved in the Coalition and will report publicly on an annual basis on actions undertaken toward the realization of these Common Commitments.
- b) That the following land acknowledgement be approved for use at Richmond Hill City events, meetings and Council and Committee meetings:
- “I/we would like to acknowledge that Richmond Hill is situated on lands covered by Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaties. Over several centuries, Richmond Hill has been traversed by many First Nations and is currently home to Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island.”
- c) That staff place a by-law on a future Council agenda to include the land acknowledgement as part of all Council and Committee meetings.

Contact Person:

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Report Approval:

Submitted by: Lise Conde, Manager, Strategy and Government Relations

Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

Background:

In November 2020, Council approved four Council Strategic Priorities for the remainder of the current term. These are Balancing Growth and Green; Fiscal Responsibility; A Strong Sense of Belonging; and Getting Around the City.

As part of the Strong Sense of Belonging Priority, Council identified the creation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative as one of the ways to implement this priority.

Definitions

Diversity is about the individual. It is about the variety of unique dimensions, qualities and characteristics we all possess.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Inclusion is about the collective. It is about creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects, accepts and values difference.

Diversity and inclusion is about capturing the uniqueness of the individual; creating an environment that values and respects individuals for their talents, skills and abilities to the benefit of the collective.

The Case for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

It is important to understand the purpose for DEI, that it supports creativity and innovation by leveraging the diversity of talent in a workforce and assists us to better understand the needs of our customers. Diversity is a means to new and different ideas, and, according to the Canadian Centre for Diversity in Inclusion (CCDI), it is what new hires are looking for in their workplace as it is the basis for corporate efforts in equity and inclusion.

Benchmarking and Best Practices

As part of research for this work, City staff reviewed the DEI plans and practices of 12 municipalities: Markham, Oshawa, Guelph, London, Ajax, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Stouffville, Vaughan, Newmarket and York Region.

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Findings of this research indicated that municipalities have undertaken:

- A workforce census to understand the diversity of their staff and to guide future workforce planning efforts to build DEI organizationally;
- Short and longer-term DEI strategies and plans (several are on second or third iteration).
- Creation of staff and external DEI advisory committees tasked with specific activities in support of a DEI strategy or plan.
- Several are now hiring or have hired a diversity officer, manager, specialist and/or head, often at the executive table.
- Some municipalities (Markham, Oshawa, Ajax and Ottawa) recommend use of consultants for workforce census and plan development
- Use of an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement at Council and other meetings.

Comparator municipalities advised that the best approach to DEI is to start with early work on employee-focused initiatives to build capacity to improve the DEI lens on service provision to the community.

DEI Work Underway

The City began work on the DEI Initiative with the approval of Council's Strategic Priorities in November 2020, however, the City had already begun making changes to support becoming a more diverse, equitable and inclusive organization. The following are the City's efforts to-date:

- The City is a signatory of York Region Inclusion Charter as of September 2018, which states:
Richmond Hill celebrates its growing and diverse population and staff as a source of strength and vitality. The Charter supports the [City]'s commitment to inclusion and enhances our ongoing work to attract and retain the best talent, promote innovation and provide an excellent service experience. Richmond Hill's dedication to inclusion enhances its vision to be a place where people come together to build their community.
- Staff from Corporate and Financial Services participate as members of the York Region Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group.
- Access Richmond Hill provides service in over 200 language through the Language Line.
- In 2019, the City provided, and continues to offer, an e-learning course available to all staff – The Path: Your Journey through Indigenous Canada.
- In 2020 and 2021, City staff meetings included speakers on Unconscious Bias and Racism/ Discrimination. This has been supplemented with a diversity calendar updated monthly on the City's intranet site for staff. Staff are encouraged to plan meetings and events in a way to accommodate their teams using this information.

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- Starting in 2021, the City Manager began to share information on cultural celebrations and recognitions, as well as important dates in support of DEI with all staff via email to encourage awareness.
- Became an Employee Partner of the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)

DEI Moving Forward

City staff have identified a number of efforts to continue to build the City's DEI initiative moving forward.

UNESCO's Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities

Staff are recommending that the City renew its commitment to inclusion by approving a motion to become a member of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, as have a number of other Canadian municipalities including Markham and Vaughan. The City had previously committed to an earlier iteration of this group known as the Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD) a number of years ago.

The benefit to joining this group is access to resources and a network of municipalities from Canada and around the world and the opportunity to share experiences towards more inclusive communities. In order to become a member, the Richmond Hill Council must approve the resolution attached as Appendix 1, which is recommended in this report.

Workforce Census

As identified in the benchmarking research, municipalities achieve more success with DEI efforts when they first understand the diversity and needs of their own workforce. Staff in Strategy and Government Relations and Human Resources are currently acquiring the expertise to conduct this census of staff in the next few months, which will be accommodated within current budgets.

Staff Training Plan

Increasing awareness and education are key components of any approach to DEI. The City has developed a training plan that will inform and educate staff in a range of topics including: unconscious bias, inclusivity, communicating about culturally sensitive issues and allyship. Training will be rolled out over the next 12 to 18 months and will become an ongoing area of learning for the organization.

DEI Strategy Business Case

As the next step to the City's efforts toward DEI, with the results of a workforce census, staff recommend that a full Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy be developed in 2022, to inform how the City can continue to implement a DEI lens on our work and the resources that may be required. This would be the Plan of Action referenced in the

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UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities motion. A business case for Council's consideration for this strategy is included in the 2022 Operating Budget.

Richmond Hill Land Acknowledgement

At its June 23, 2021 meeting, Council directed staff to research and consult with Indigenous communities to develop a Richmond Hill Land Acknowledgement Statement (SRCM.21.07 attached as Appendix 2). Since then, staff from the Strategy and Government Relations (SGR) section of the City Manager's Office have partnered with the Policy Planning team, as they were already reaching out to these communities as part of the Official Plan review, to speak with various First Nations groups and members of the Indigenous Community.

SGR staff invited eleven (11) First Nations to provide input and engaged with a total of four (4) First Nations: Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (sole signatory of Treaty 13), Curve Lake First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation (signatories of the Williams Treaties), and the Huron-Wendat First Nation. The remaining groups did not respond with any feedback to our correspondence.

There were two sessions which occurred on August 24, and September 14, respectively. During these sessions, staff invited First Nations who attended to provide feedback on research which had been conducted in order to: address any (in)accuracies in the findings, highlight critical areas that should be included in the statement, and discuss any other important information that First Nations wanted staff to consider prior to the drafting of the statement. No additional feedback beyond the discussions at these meetings was received in response to the correspondence.

Feedback provided during the meetings was overwhelmingly positive. Staff received clarity on the distinction between treaty lands and traditional territories, examples of land acknowledgements adopted by other municipalities within the jurisdiction of treaty holders, and what to consider as the City drafted its statement. Nations emphasized the importance of continued fruitful engagement and involvement as required. All First Nations groups consulted supported the City's direction to develop and implement a land acknowledgement.

As previously highlighted in Appendix 2 to staff report SRCM.21.10, (SRCM.21.07 – Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement) is important to note that a land acknowledgement demonstrates recognition and respect for Indigenous peoples and supports education on the history of the lands on which we live and work. The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls on Canadians to:

“Decolonize by learning the true history of Canada and Indigenous history in your local area. Learn about and celebrate Indigenous People's history, cultures, pride and diversity, acknowledging the land you live on and its importance to local Indigenous communities, both historically and today.” (15.2)

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Such an acknowledgement appropriately takes place at the beginning of meetings, conferences, and presentations.

Based on the feedback received from the consultation sessions, staff recommend that the following text be adopted as the City's official Land Acknowledgement Statement, to be used for staff and public meetings and events and, should Council choose, at the beginning of Council and Committee meetings.

"I/we would like to acknowledge that Richmond Hill is situated on lands covered by Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaties. Over several centuries, Richmond Hill has been traversed by many First Nations and is currently home to Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island."

The recommendations in this report include authorization for amendment of the Procedure By-law to add the reading of a land acknowledgement statement at the beginning of Council and Committee meetings. For Council meetings the land acknowledgment would be in addition to the National Anthem.

Staff from the Strategy and Government Relations section will continue to work towards developing relationships with Indigenous Communities that have an interest in Richmond Hill, as part of regular best practices in municipal government relations.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

There are no financial implications to the recommendations in this report.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Undertaking work to support greater Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the City of Richmond Hill as a community and workforce directly supports Council's Strategic Priority of "A Strong Sense of Belonging," which specifically identified a DEI initiative as an implementation item.

Climate Change Considerations:

Climate change considerations are not applicable to this staff report.

Conclusion:

The City of Richmond Hill has undertaken a number of activities in support of Council's Strategic Priority of "A Strong Sense of Belonging," including the activities underway or planned related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Notably, this report provides a summary of efforts towards the creation of a Richmond Hill Land Acknowledgment and proposes wording that is recommended to be used at Council, community and staff meetings.

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Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Appendix 1: Declaration to Join the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities
- Appendix 2: SRCM.21.07 – Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCM.21.10 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative and Richmond Hill Land Acknowledgement Statement revised.docx
Attachments:	- SRCM.21.10 - Appendix 1.docx - Appendix 2 to SRCM.21.10 - SRCM.21.07 - Land Acknowledgement Statement.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 18, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

MaryAnne Dempster - Oct 18, 2021 - 9:33 AM