

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 2021 June 30

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** 14500 00

**SUBJECT:** INCREASED CITY OF BURNABY SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY  
ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVES

**PURPOSE:** To propose increased City of Burnaby support for community anti-racism initiatives.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize staff to implement the identified avenues for increased City support of community anti-racism initiatives, as outlined in *Section 4.0* of this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be circulated to the Public Safety Committee, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, and the Burnaby Public Library Board for information.

**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Social Planning Committee, at its Open meeting held on 2021 May 4, received a Notice of Motion requesting the City of Burnaby to consider the feasibility and advisability of striking a special taskforce on anti-racism. This matter was subsequently referred to staff to report back to the Committee. This report responds to that request.

**2.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

Civic involvement in, and increased support of, community-based anti-racism initiatives, is aligned with the following Council-adopted policies and plans/strategies: *Corporate Strategic Plan* adopted 2017, *Social Sustainability Strategy* adopted 2011, *Equity Policy* originally adopted 1994, updated policy adopted in 2020, and *Healthy Community Policy*, adopted 1991.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND

Before Burnaby existed, these lands were home to the ancestors of several local Central Coast Salish Nations. Today, the descendants of these Nations continue to live in Burnaby and the adjacent municipalities that developed within their traditional territories. These are the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm and Skwxwú7mesh speaking peoples. Burnaby is also home to Indigenous peoples from other parts of BC, and across Canada.

Since its founding as a city, Burnaby has been notable for the ethno-cultural diversity of its residents. Today Burnaby is a hyper-diverse community, and is only one of a handful of Canadian cities without a ‘majority ethnic group’<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, over half of those who live in Burnaby were not born in Canada and over 120 languages are spoken by community members. Burnaby is the third highest ‘refugee receiving’ city in BC and also receives a significant number of ‘refugee claimants’<sup>2</sup> each year.

Historically, Burnaby has experienced both periods of community cohesion and of exclusion and discrimination, often on the basis of ethno-cultural origin. For example, as in many other BC and Canadian communities, land ownership in the early days of the city was largely restricted to European residents through a series of discriminatory laws and social practices. As well, workers of Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, or Indigenous origin were largely restricted to working in very low-paying industries through ‘white only’ labour policies in place at early local employers, such as sawmills and industrial sites.

More recently, Burnaby has been experiencing an increase in reported hate crimes, particularly those targeting Asian community members. The Burnaby RCMP reports that the number of reported hate crimes in Burnaby increased from 20 in 2019, to 43 in 2020. Of these approximately 63% in 2020 were targeted towards Asian community members. A hate crime is understood in this context as a criminal offence targeting an identifiable group – that is, any section of the public distinguished by race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression, or on any other similar factor.

The motion received at the 2021 May 4 Social Planning Committee meeting in relation to a potential Mayor’s Taskforce on Anti-Racism was put forward within the specific context of this localized increase in hate crimes.

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<sup>1</sup> Phrasing used by Statistics Canada which indicates that no particular ethno-cultural group accounts for more than 40% of the total municipal population.

<sup>2</sup> A ‘refugee claimant’ is defined as a person who is seeking Canada’s protection at the borders (arriving via air, over the border with the United States, via boat etc.) or within the country, rather than those who arrive in Canada already being recognized by the Federal Government as a refugee.

To: Social Planning Committee  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Increased City of Burnaby Support for  
Community Anti-Racism Initiatives

2021 June 30..... Page 3

#### **4.0 PROPOSED APPROACH TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY DIALOGUES ON ANTI-RACISM**

The City of Burnaby has long been committed to the pursuit and support of social and economic justice, and the full inclusion of all community members. As noted above, this has been enshrined in policy since the 1990's including the Healthy Community Policy (1991) and the original Equity Policy (1994). More recently this commitment has been solidified through the Social Sustainability Strategy (2011), the Corporate Strategic Plan (2017), and the updated Equity Policy (2020).

The focus on inclusion has been actioned through a myriad of programs and initiatives – for example:

- The City is a member of the UNESCO Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (2012).
- The City is a founding member of the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (2007).
- The City is a founding member of the Burnaby Together: Organizing Against Racism and Hate Table (2017).
- The City is a founding member of the Burnaby Inter-Faith Network (2014).
- An Access Advisory Committee has provided advice and input to the City on access and inclusion issues related to persons with disabilities since 1988.
- Burnaby City Council formally recognized that Burnaby is on unceded Indigenous territory in 2019 June and approved beginning Government-to-Government relations with local First Nations in 2019 November.

Within the context of the above policy framework and continuing actions being undertaken by the City in this area, staff reviewed the feasibility and advisability of a Mayor's Taskforce on the subject of anti-racism. A Mayor's Taskforce is a formal approach undertaken through a specially struck Committee of Council, with a set Chair (member of Council) and a legislatively mandated format, meeting structure, and agenda setting process. The model, while effective in select instances, can involve significant time to establish. It is the opinion of staff that this particular format is better suited to discussions related to civic policy and programmatic action (e.g. Housing), than the fluid, dynamic and community-based discussions necessary to have a substantive conversation about racism and discrimination in the local context.

Instead staff are proposing a two-pronged approach that will support a more timely and flexible increase in City of Burnaby support for community anti-racism initiatives. This approach is detailed below.

##### **4.1 Immediate Financial and Expanded Logistical Support for Burnaby Together**

Specific City support for community-based anti-racism initiatives in recent years have been focused through the City's role in the Burnaby Together Table, noted above. Burnaby Together is

To: Social Planning Committee  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Increased City of Burnaby Support for  
Community Anti-Racism Initiatives

2021 June 30..... Page 4

part of the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network<sup>3</sup> and was formed in 2017 to provide community leadership for anti-racism and anti-hate work in the Burnaby community.

The local non-profit Burnaby Family Life is the administrative host for the Table, and membership is composed of over 20 local organizations and groups. A small operations grant is provided annually to the Table by the Province (Resilience BC), and the work of the Table is augmented through in-kind contributions from its members. Examples of the work of the Table include hosting community dialogues (e.g. 'A Participatory Conversation on Anti-Asian Racism', May 2021) and convening related training for community members and social service sector staff (e.g. 'BIPOC Voices on Racism & How to be Anti-Racist', November 2020).

City staff (Social Planning) act as Co-Chair for the Table, and provide additional administrative and logistical support. The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department (Youth Services), the Burnaby RCMP, and Burnaby Public Library also all have representation at the Table.

As City staff increase their involvement in Burnaby Together, additional financial support is also required to facilitate anti-racism activities. Funds for these activities have been allocated to the Planning Department through operating contingency. Any additional funding requirements for 2022 and onwards will be requested through the 2022 – 2016 Financial Plan process.

This financial support will enable the Table to undertake a community scanning process to identify existing local supports (formal and informal) for community members experiencing incidences of racism and discrimination while also clarifying the role of the Table as a catalyst for community action and support. The process would also identify gaps, and convene a conversation of service providers and community members to discuss possible partnerships and streamlined and/or expanded programs. The findings of this process would be presented to the members of the Table (including the City), and will inform the next proposed phase of expanded City work in this area, as described in *Section 4.2* below.

As noted above, staff (Social Planning) act in a Co-Chair capacity for Burnaby Together. In this role, staff will be closely involved in the planning, oversight, and roll-out of this work, and will keep Council apprised on progress and results.

#### **4.2 Mayor's Roundtables on Anti-Racism**

As further increased civic action on the topic(s) of anti-racism, staff are proposing that a series of Mayor's Roundtables on Anti-Racism be convened, with one in each quadrant of the City. The Roundtable format is being recommended as it provides a prominent, flexible and community-responsive model of conversation and action. As opposed to a Taskforce, a Roundtable format will

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<sup>3</sup> The Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network is province wide approach in identifying and challenging racism through a "Hub and Spoke" model. This model has a centralized "hub" (i.e. Resilience BC) that anchors the program and provides oversight; the "spokes" are community-based groups/entities (e.g. Burnaby Together) that implement local actions.

allow for greater community member participation, a flexible format, and for rotating chairs while also enabling direct participation by Council.

The details of convening the Roundtables will be informed by the community scanning process completed by Burnaby Together with City financial support, as outlined above. It is also noted that the results of the City-supported, community-based research into the current experience of racialized newcomers, with a sub-focus on the experiences of Black community members and/or People of African Descent in Burnaby, will also inform the details of how the Roundtables are convened. This research is being undertaken by the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table, with financial support from the City of Burnaby, Simon Fraser University, the Provincial Immigration Policy and Integration Branch (Multiculturalism Grants), and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

Goals of the proposed Roundtables would be to:

- gain a better understanding of how Burnaby residents experience racism and discrimination, and to gather their input for combating these experiences;
- examine avenues of community resilience to prevent and respond to racism and discrimination;
- discuss in greater detail how the City and other local institutions can support existing community anti-racism efforts, and can further implement internal-facing equity actions; and
- produce a charter of community values standing against racism and discrimination.

It is proposed that this series of Roundtables be undertaken within the 2022 fiscal year, and budgeted for accordingly. Staff leadership would be provided by the Planning and Building Department (Social Planning), with full participation from all other City departments and entities (e.g. Burnaby RCMP, Burnaby Public Library). An internal staff working group would be formed to support this work, and ensure that the findings are communicated amongst staff and into respective work programs across the City.

A final report, including a set of initial actions, would be presented to Council at the end of this work. It is anticipated that the results would include potential actions directed towards the City, local non-profits, individuals, community associations, and higher levels of government. Based on the City-directed actions, staff will keep Council informed regarding implementation details and timeframes.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Building upon Burnaby's long-standing ongoing focus on inclusion for all community members, and its fundamental rejection of all and any acts of racism and discrimination, it is recommended that the Committee request Council to authorize staff to implement the identified avenues for increased City support of community anti-racism initiatives, as outlined in *Section 4.0* of this report.

To: Social Planning Committee  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Increased City of Burnaby Support for  
Community Anti-Racism Initiatives

2021 June 30.....Page 6

It is also recommended that a copy of this report be circulated to the Public Safety Committee, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, and the Burnaby Public Library Board for information.



E.W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

RM/sa

cc:	Acting City Manager	Fire Chief
	Director Engineering	Chief Librarian
	Director Corporate Services	Chief Information Officer
	Director Finance	OIC - RCMP
	Director Public Safety and Community Services	City Solicitor
	Director Human Resources	City Clerk
	Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	

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