

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

**DATE:** 2021 October 27

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** 14500 00

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

**PURPOSE:** To provide further information and make recommendations for further action related to continued City of Burnaby supports for community anti-racism initiatives.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to approve the formation of an Anti-Racism Sub-Committee of the Social Planning Committee, as outlined in *Section 4.3* of this report.

**REPORT**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Social Planning Committee, under the New Business portion of its Open meeting held on 2021 May 4, received a motion requesting the City of Burnaby to consider the feasibility and advisability of striking a special task force on anti-racism. Staff reported back to the Committee at its 2021 July 6 meeting recommending that a community roundtable approach be pursued. The Committee subsequently referred the report back to staff requesting an outline of the steps necessary to establish a Mayor's Task force on anti-racism. This report responds to that request and provides further information on continued City supports for community anti-racism initiatives.

**2.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

Civic involvement in, and continued 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.

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### **3.0 OUTLINE OF STEPS NEEDED TO ESTABLISH A MAYOR'S TASK FORCE**

As outlined in the Community Charter [*Section 116 (2)(e) / Section 141*], the Mayor of a local government in B.C. may establish standing committees of Council, including bodies such as task forces, for matters the Mayor considers would best be dealt with by a committee. This responsibility includes appointing members, and acting as Chair, or appointing another member of Council to act as the Chair. The Mayor also can appoint other members of Council as the Vice-Chair and Members, and, if applicable, can appoint members of the public to serve as members of the committee.

As such, the first step necessary for establishing a task force is a report from the Mayor, establishing such a body, presented and approved during a regular, open Council meeting. The establishment of any new committee or task force also requires a corresponding allocation of budget and staff. Necessary staffing includes representatives from the Clerk's Department, who provide administrative support to the committee and ensures that meetings/proceedings comply with all necessary bylaws and legislation, as well as departmental representatives that provide subject-matter specific input, and respond to information requests (e.g. Planning and Building – Social Planning, Corporate Services).

If the task force or committee includes public membership, a recruitment process then occurs, seeking applications from interested community members. As part of the responsibilities listed above, the Mayor selects from the applicants and appoints these individuals to the committee, through a report submitted at an open Council meeting.

The Chair sets the Agendas for the meetings, and discussion in the meetings must follow the Burnaby Procedure Bylaw (2004). The content of the bylaw reflects the general principles of 'Robert's Rules of Order'<sup>1</sup>.

#### **3.1 Limitations and Benefits of a Task Force Model**

The recent experience of the Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing has highlighted some of the limitations and benefits of a task force model. Benefits include:

- participation of Council representatives and community members in the same discussions;
- effective mechanism to address policies, procedures, and requirements (e.g. bylaws) that are directly within City control;
- operation within existing City governance structures; and
- outcomes feed directly into staff workplans.

Due to these benefits, the Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing was successful in identifying new policy directions for the City on the topic of housing, and providing clear direction to staff for implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Robert's Rules' refers to standard parliamentary procedure which articulates a systematic process of discussion involving the introduction of motions, debates on motions, and votes on motions in various configurations.

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However, certain limitations of the process were also highlighted. These include:

- the legislated process of appointing members can cause those community applicants not selected to feel hurt and disassociated with the resulting process, and can risk losing their input and participation;
- procedural rules and regulations can inhibit discussion of complex and sensitive topics, and with permission to speak granted through the Chair, the natural flow of dialogue can be disrupted;
- members with less knowledge and experience of working with 'Robert's Rules of Order' can feel inhibited from fully participating; and
- if recommendations of the task force are not within City control implementation, but rather can only be achieved through advocacy and partnerships, identified items can take significant time to achieve.

Based upon these experiences, and in background preparation for this report, staff sought the advice of experts in the area of anti-racism to seek their perspectives on the suitability of both a task force model and a roundtable model (as was proposed in the report the Committee received at its 2021 July 6 meeting) on this topic. These experts include scholars affiliated with the Simon Fraser University (SFU) Centre for Dialogue: Dr. Robert Daum, and Dr. June Francis. Dr. Daum works primarily with post-secondary institutions and levels of government in advancing equity, diversity, accessibility, and reconciliation. Dr. Francis focuses on strengthening cross-sector collaboration, learning and innovation for more inclusive resilient solutions in governance, policies and industry practice. As well, Dr. Francis has been appointed as the special advisory to the President of SFU on anti-racism. Dr. Francis was also invited to speak to the Social Planning Committee at its 2021 September 7 meeting, to share her reflections.

A synopsis of staff learnings based on these conversations is below.

- a task force model is ill-suited to intense and personal conversations related to experiences of racism and discrimination given its formality and reliance on parliamentary procedure.
- a roundtable model is also ill-suited to conversations of this nature as it runs the risk of creating 'unsafe' spaces, where individuals who have experienced instances of racism and discrimination may have their tellings denied, discounted or discredited by other participants who do not share their worldview.
- within a task force model, the application and selection process to identify public members is problematic in that it potentially inadvertently 'values' one set of voices over another, as the written application process can be a barrier to fulsome participation from all aspects of society, including those with limited literacy in English.
- within a roundtable model, the open format of the dialogues has, in other communities who have recently undertaken this approach, been dominated by individuals who espouse racist beliefs and language, negatively impacting other participants.
- both a task force model and a roundtable model have a significant limitation in that many of the societal factors affecting and impacting racism and its prevention are outside of City influence and control. Conducting a process that asks participants to re-share emotionally

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impactful experiences of racism and discrimination without a clear pathway between this sharing and positive action has the potential to re-traumatize the teller, without appropriate response or redress.

- both a task force and roundtable model risk sparking lateral aggression between and within communities for priority in a hierarchy of victimization, given the necessarily time-limited scope of both processes and the interacting complexity of issues related to racism, which may not be able to be fully explored as a result.

In lieu of either a Task Force or Roundtable model, the following was instead recommended:

- The City participate in community research projects and related initiatives in order to identify those areas of civic operations which could be improved or expanded to better promote inclusion for all community members, from an anti-racism and equity-based approach.
- Based upon these identified areas that topic-specific processes be established, including the possible creation of advisory groups or community-based committees, to identify specific actions for improvement.
- Work to implement the City's updated Equity Policy (updated 2020) be accelerated, across all City divisions and departments.

The City is participating in several community research projects and related initiatives, including as a funding partner. More information is provided in *Section 4.0* below.

#### **4.0 UPDATE ON CONTINUED CITY SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY BASED ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVES**

For the Committee's information, an update and overview of current related initiatives, and City participation in these initiatives, is provided below. In total, the City has provided \$75,000 in financial support in 2021 to these initiatives as well as logistical support via staff (Social Planning) participation in the associated community committees referenced below.

##### **4.1 Research into the Experience of Racialized Newcomers and Black Community Members**

As the Committee is aware, the City is currently providing financial and logistical support to a community-based research project, which is currently underway, to examine the obstacles, opportunities, and experiences that racialized newcomers face in Burnaby, as well as consider and recommend ways in which identified barriers can be dismantled. The project also includes a separate, though connected, stream of enquiry into the experience of Black community members. Impetus for this project began with the Committee requesting Council to officially recognize the United Nations Decade for Persons of African Descent, which it did at its 2020 September 15 meeting. This research is being administratively led by the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT), of which the City is a member. The lead researcher is Dr. June Francis.

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To date, the City has provided \$50,000 in direct funding to this project, and staff (Social Planning) sit on the project steering committee. Other funding partners are Burnaby Family Life (which is the administrative lead of the BIPT), Simon Fraser University, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and the Provincial Immigration Policy and Integration Branch (Multiculturalism Grants). A funding application to the Canadian Heritage (Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program) has also been submitted.

This research began in July 2021 and is anticipated to release its first findings in the spring of 2022. Currently background and scoping work is underway, including statistical analysis and initial key informant interviews.

#### **4.2 Burnaby Together: Environmental Scan and Related Community Process**

Since the Committee's 2021 September 7 meeting, the City has provided funding (\$25,000) to the Burnaby Together: Organizing Against Racism and Hate Table to complete an additional community process related to local anti-racism resilience. Burnaby Together is part of the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network<sup>2</sup> and was formed in 2017 to provide community leadership for anti-racism and anti-hate work in the Burnaby community. The City was a founding member of Burnaby Together, and currently staff (Social Planning) act in a co-chair capacity, as well as providing 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.

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).

The City funding has been provided to Burnaby Together in order to enable capacity for an additional community research process, as outlined below. The work is being undertaken by lead researcher Sangeeta Subramanian, who has over 20 years of professional experience in the not-for-profit sector in Canada and Asia in the areas of equity and inclusion, facilitation, research and policy, partnership development, and civic engagement. Ms. Subramanian, along with Burnaby Together Coordinator Ana Maria Bustamante, have been invited to speak to the Committee as its 2021 November 2 meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> The Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network is a 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 entities (e.g. Burnaby Together) that implement local actions.



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### Burnaby Together Community Research Project

*Environmental Scan:* This process will identify and confirm existing, available local and regional supports (formal and informal) for community members who experience incidences of racism and discrimination. The process would also identify gaps and future opportunities.

*Community Conversations:* To augment the environmental scan process, a number of community conversations will occur with key community representatives of particularly impacted communities (e.g. Black community, East Asian community, South Asian community). This will provide needed lived experience and qualitative input to the proposed process.

*Community Service Sector Conversations:* Based upon results of the environmental scan, and informed by the community conversations, this project would convene targeted conversations of service providers to discuss possible partnerships and streamlined and/or expanded programs to address identified gaps or needs. This process may also include seeking new members for the Table.

*Update Protocol:* As a culmination of the work proposed above, this project – in partnership with the membership of Burnaby Together – will update the Table’s existing protocol for responding to local incidences of racism and hate, and engage in related community promotion of the updated protocol (as appropriate). The protocol uses a framework for responding to local incidents of racism and hate from a community resilience approach.

This community research project is currently planned to conclude in May 2022, with a final report provided to the City. In addition to providing an overview of findings, it is anticipated that the Final Report will also reflect on City operations, policies and practices – both in terms of what is working well, and what needs to be improved.

Members of the Social Planning Committee are encouraged to participate in and support the Burnaby Together community research project. Staff will follow up with the Committee with specific correspondence about these participation options.

### **4.3 Next Steps and Formation of an Anti-Racism Sub-Committee**

Based upon the received expert advice discussed above, staff will continue to participate in and support the community initiatives outlined. As noted, these initiatives have received a total of \$75,000 in civic funding in 2021. The findings and results of these processes will inform and identify areas for future action.

As a proposed further action, which builds upon the investment and expertise of Committee members, staff are proposing that, prior to the final reports of the above research being publicly released, an Anti-Racism Sub-Committee of the Social Planning Committee be formed. The focus of this Sub-Committee would be to review the results of the research and to determine the Terms of Reference and model for a City-led process to address the research findings that pertain to the

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City. This City-led process could include striking a Task Force, with mitigation measures in place to address the concerns identified above.

Staff also note that the City is continuing to implement its updated Equity Policy, which will include the hiring of an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Manager. It is anticipated that this individual will provide further guidance on how the City can further support community anti-racism initiatives, as well as identifying areas for internal review and improvement.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee request Council to approve the formation of an Anti-Racism Sub-Committee of the Social Planning Committee, as outlined in *Section 4.3* of this report.



E.W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

RM:sa

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