

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

March 21, 2001

To: Policy and Finance Committee

From: Chief Administrative Officer

Subject: Development of a City of Toronto Declaration and Plan of Action regarding the Elimination of Racism in relation to the United Nations-World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (UN-WCAR)

Purpose:

To provide information to City Council on the process leading up to the United Nations -World Conference on Racism (UN-WCAR) scheduled for Durban, South Africa at the end of August 2001 and the development of a City of Toronto Declaration and Plan of Action for the elimination of racism and related intolerance.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. UN-WCAR provides an important opportunity for City Council to assert its leadership role with other sectors and as an influencer of public opinion in addressing diversity issues and opposing all forms of discrimination.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) City Council's Diversity Advocate be requested to include this report at the bi-annual consultation scheduled for June, 2001 with members of the Community Advisory Committees on: Aboriginal Affairs, Disability Issues, Lesbian, Gay, and Bi-Sexual and Transgender Issues, Race and Ethnic Relations, and Status of Women and request that the committees provide input to the development of the City's Declaration and Plan of Action regarding the elimination of racism and other related intolerance;
- (2) this report be forwarded to the Board of Directors, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and its Standing Committee on Race Relations with the recommendation that FCM request the Government of Canada to include representatives from the municipal

sector in the Canadian delegation to the United Nations World Conference Against Racism;

- (3) in keeping with the City of Toronto's on-going leadership role in the elimination of racism and related intolerance, the following recommendations be forwarded to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), and the Minister of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) requesting that the Government of Canada:
 - (a) establish a domestic plan of action for the elimination of racism that responds to the critical issues identified by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) during the national consultative process leading up to UN-WCAR;
 - (b) include a commitment in the domestic plan of action to amend the Multiculturalism Act and other appropriate legislation with the objective of establishing statutory obligations towards the elimination of racism;
 - (c) establish within the domestic plan of action performance management indicators and mechanisms for compliance and reporting on the progress being made towards the elimination of racism and other forms of intolerance;
 - (d) establish a national urban policy to address social exclusion, racial inequalities and all forms of intolerance and to hold annual inter-governmental meetings with all orders of government, including municipalities, on the progress being made towards the elimination of racism;
 - (e) establish mechanisms to support a range of intergovernmental as well as public/private partnerships and public/voluntary sector partnerships in pursuit of the achievement of equity; and
- (4) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

At its meeting on February 27, 2001, City Council's Community Advisory Committee on Race and Ethnic Relations requested a staff report on the status of preparations for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (UN-WCAR). The UN-WCAR conference and the parallel NGO conference will be held in Durban, South Africa at the end of August, 2001.

The United Nations General Assembly established the following objectives for the World Conference on Racism:

- To review the progress made in the fight against racism and racial discrimination and to re-appraise the obstacles and identify ways to overcome them;

- To consider ways and means to better ensure the application of existing standards and their implementation to combat racism and racial discrimination;
- To increase the level of awareness about the scourge of racism and racial discrimination;
- To formulate concrete recommendations on ways to increase the effectiveness of the activities and mechanisms of the United Nations through programmes aimed at combating racism and racial discrimination;
- To review the political, historical, economic social, cultural and other factors leading to racism and racial discrimination;
- To formulate concrete recommendations to further action-oriented national, regional and international measures aimed at combating all forms of racism and racial discrimination; and
- To draw up concrete recommendations to ensure the United Nations has the necessary resources for its activities to combat racism and racial discrimination.

The convenor of the UN Conference is the Commissioner of Human Rights, a role filled by the former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson. A number of regional meetings have been held around the world. On May, 2001, a Preparatory Conference will be held to hold discussions regarding the outcome document. This will be followed by the main conference at the end of August, 2001.

Each country is expected to report on the actions which have been taken regarding its human rights protections, the elimination of racism and all forms of intolerance. Particular attention will be given to issues facing youth and indigenous/aboriginal peoples. Staff will be providing progress reports on the outcomes of the Preparatory Conference being held in May and the NGO and World Conferences scheduled for August/September.

The Government of Canada is engaging civil society and calling upon all institutional sectors to involve and commit themselves on this issue of vital importance. A National Advisory Committee was established to advise the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) on the implementation of a nationwide consultation process and to participate in the development of a discussion paper for the national conference at the end of the consultations, and to contribute to the development of Canada's position.

In addition to the national consultations, Toronto Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) have been meeting regularly to provide input to the UN-WCAR process. The City's Access and Equity Unit has helped to facilitate NGO meetings in Toronto as part of their community capacity building function.

In addition, because of the importance of this matter to urban areas across Canada, the Board of Directors of FCM at its meeting of December 9, 2000, called on their members to implement policies against racism, strengthen community initiatives and work with other orders of government.

Comments:

Global migration patterns and changes in Canadian immigration policy have brought the world to Toronto. Today the City's residents are from about 200 countries of origin and speak more

than 100 languages. Almost half were not born in Canada or are non-white. This is a sharp contrast to the demographic City patterns prior to 1961 when virtually all immigrants (92 per cent) were from Europe (including Britain) and 97 per cent of the population was white. Toronto has found that its diversity has been a continuing source of success and prosperity for the City as a whole.

However, the City's success has not been equally shared across its communities. Racism, along with poverty, hunger, homelessness, and the under-utilization of skilled foreign trained professionals are among the top social issues.

(a) Evidence of racism

Many recent studies across all sectors have found evidence of racism - both direct and systemic- being experienced by residents and workers in Toronto. The following is a summary of recent studies and reports about various sectors.

- A 1999 study on racial stereotyping in the media by Ryerson University examined the ways in which some Toronto newspapers stereotype Jamaicans and Vietnamese. Between 1994 and 1997, forty-five per cent of the articles mentioned Jamaicans in sports and entertainment. There was an over-representation of articles featuring Jamaicans connected with crime, immigration and deportation.

Blacks make up 7 per cent of the Greater Toronto Area population, but they were featured in 44 per cent of the images of minorities used in crime stories. The study also showed that the media portrayed Vietnamese people as criminally and socially deviant. Thirty-seven per cent of articles featured Vietnamese with crime and 37 per cent with other social problems.

- The Ontario Human Rights Commission reported that in 1998-99, 64 per cent of its complaints were based on race, colour, ethnic origin and creed, with employment being the highest area of discrimination. The Commission also noted that in addition to systemic patterns of discrimination which result in segregation, under-employment, unequal pay, etc., there are many sectors in which workers continue to be subjected to direct forms of discrimination, including racist comments, sexual remarks and graffiti.
- The 1999 Annual Report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission noted that while the representation of visible minority groups and Aboriginal people is increasing in the public and private sectors covered by federal employment equity legislation, these groups were still below projected rates for Canada. The Commission noted that in 1998, Aboriginal hiring in the private sector was at 1.4 per cent below the availability level of 2.1 per cent and that Aboriginal people experienced disproportionate numbers of terminations. Visible minority representation increased to 9.9 per cent which was also below the 10.3 per cent availability rate established by the 1996 Census.
- The 2000 study commissioned by the City from Dr. Ornstein of the Institute for Social Research at York University, "Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto", found that for ethno-racial minorities, the level of education attained does not translate into higher paid,

stable employment. For example, the education levels of Blacks, African and Caribbean Torontonians was only slightly below the percentage level of the general population, yet this community faced 19 per cent of unemployment compared to 8.1 per cent faced by persons of European origins. A similar pattern exists for the Arab and West Asian population for whom 12.8 per cent are university graduates but experience an unemployment rate 10.8 per cent higher than the general population.

- The lack of recognition of non-Canadian credentials and work experience results in the under-utilization of many immigrant professionals who are unable to find entry level positions in the field of their professional competence. A 1999 survey by the *Toronto Star* showed that 25 per cent of South Asian new immigrants were professionals in their home countries but only 13 per cent of all South Asians were able to find employment in their fields.
- The 1999 study by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, *the Hugh Barnett Report*, reported on discrimination in housing and noted the linkages between race and income. The Report found that people were discriminated against on the basis of colour, but officially refused accommodation because of income level. The researchers found that landlords state that they do not rent to people from specific countries or that they prefer to rent to people from their own culture.
- A 1999 Goldfarb study, *Toronto Star* found that 62 per cent of Blacks in Toronto experienced discrimination based on their race. Thirty-five per cent of Black respondents reported that their children had been victims of verbal assaults or taunts and 10 per cent had been subject to physical abuse.
- The 1999 Toronto Police Hate Crime Report indicated that consistent with previous reports, the highest reported area of reporting is race, followed by multiple categories, sexual orientation and religion. Some of the factors which contributed to these unprovoked offences include the offender's perception of the victim as a threat to their way of life, their community or their employment opportunities.

Since 1993, there have been 1,588 crimes of hate reported to the Toronto police of which the Black community has been the most victimised, and 50.3 per cent crimes of hate being against people of colour.

- The Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System (1995) found that between 1986 and 1993, the number of prisoners described as black admitted to Ontario prisons increased 204 per cent while the number of white prisoners admitted increased 23 per cent. The Report also noted that the pattern of imprisonment decisions for the same offences show that white persons found guilty were less likely than black persons to be sentenced to prison. In addition, white persons were sentenced more leniently than black persons, even though they were more likely to have a criminal record and to have a more serious record. With respect to convictions for drug offences, a sub-sample found that 55 per cent of blacks compared to 36 per cent of whites were sentenced to prison.

These data indicate that ongoing work has to be undertaken to address the inequalities experienced by various communities. The elimination of discrimination and economic disadvantage needs to be addressed in a variety of institutional, legislative, social, economic and political contexts.

(b) The Municipal response in Toronto

Over the years, Toronto City Council and its former municipalities have taken many steps to address the challenges of serving a diverse population. While the City is constrained in its direct ability to affect all areas of civic life, it has taken on a leadership role in creating a positive and welcoming environment for the City's diverse communities and has also acted as an advocate to other orders of government and to the institutional and private sectors.

Local governments have been encouraged through various United Nations covenants to establish programs to achieve the principles of equity and equality. The City of Toronto's programs have been studied by other cities around the world. The City's various policies and programs regarding equity and human rights have also been promoted through the Standing Committee on Race Relations of FCM. The need for a national urban policy on the elimination of racial discrimination and related intolerance in Canada has been noted by many.

In Toronto, Toronto City Council has undertaken the following as part of its commitment to the elimination of racism and discrimination in this City:

- Appointed a Diversity Advocate;
- Adopted an Action Plan on Access, Equity and Human Rights based on the recommendations of the Task Force on Community Access and Equity;
- Established Community Advisory Committees on Access, Equity and Human Rights to address: Aboriginal Affairs, Race and Ethnic Relations, Disability Issues, Status of Women, and Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Issues;
- Established Working Groups on Language Equity and Literacy, Immigration and Refugee issues, Elimination of Hate Activity, Employment Equity;
- Adopted a policy of non-discrimination which provides protection on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, disability, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, same sex partnership, age, marital status, family status, immigrant status, receipt of public assistance, political affiliation, religious affiliation, record of offences, level of literacy;
- Established the requirement to adopt a policy of anti-discrimination by all grant recipients and suppliers of goods and services;
- Adopted a Workplace Human Rights and Harassment Policy;
- Adopted a Policy on the Elimination of Hate Activity;
- Adopted an Employment Equity Policy;
- Continued the Access and Equity Grants Program;
- Responded to legislative proposals to amend the Immigration Act;
- Supported various public education and awareness programs addressing all forms of intolerance.

In addition to the City's corporate responsibilities, City departments also implement access and equity programs and activities to respond to community need, to provide for culturally appropriate service delivery, to work towards civic participation by all social, cultural and economic groups in the City and to identify and remove barriers to services and to civic engagement.

To undertake the foregoing, City staff are encouraged to attend training regarding cross-cultural, diversity and human right issues; to conduct employment outreach and provide information displays at community events; to utilize alternate communication formats and translation/interpreting services; to respect the diversity of the City's population e.g. in recreation and youth leadership programs; to foster the on-going development of the not-for-profit and voluntary sectors through the grants programs, provision of facilities, etc.

(c) Future considerations and actions

Staff have consulted with the sub-committee established by the Community Advisory Committee on Race and Ethnic Relations and the Diversity Advocate in the preparation of this report. The Advisory Committee will be consulted in the preparation of the City's Declaration and Action Plan.

Staff will be providing further reports to Council on the deliberations that are taking place locally, at the national level as well as at the international level. These reports will comment on the Government of Canada's submission to the United Nations and the Domestic Plan of Action, the outcomes of UN-WCAR Conference, and the establishment of a City of Toronto Declaration on the Elimination of Racism and Plan of Action.

In the meantime, the City's departments are proceeding with the implementation of the 97 recommendations which make up Council's Action Plan on Access and Equity and Human Rights. I will be providing a status report on the implementation of these recommendations to the consultative meetings between the Diversity Advocate and the Community Advisory Committees on access, equity and human rights.

Conclusions:

Notwithstanding the initiatives already taken by the City and the pride Toronto has in its diversity, the experiences of people of colour in Toronto suggest a society segmented and segregated along racial lines. The evidence of continuing racial discrimination combined with the continuing rapid changes in the composition of the City's population gives urgency to the need for reaffirming and embedding anti-racism access and equity practices into the everyday operations of municipal government. While the City is constrained in its direct ability to affect all areas of civil life, it can play a leadership role in its partnerships with local agencies, institutions and the private sector to promote access and equity and to eliminate racism.

Toronto has benefitted from its diversity . But positive measures are needed to sustain these strengths and to address the barriers caused by racism.

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