



Jamaican**Canadian**Association



November 28, 2017

EX29.11.1

Executive Committee
Toronto City Council
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Mayor Tory and Executive Committee Members,

The Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) and Caribbean African Canadian Social Services (CAF CAN) wish to express our support for the full adoption of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism by City Council, as recommended in the City Manager's November 15th report.

The JCA has been a community hub for the Jamaican Diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) since 1962. It has a long history of providing cultural programming and addressing issues that affect the broader African Canadian community. CAF CAN, the JCA's sister organization, was founded in 2014 to deliver critical social services to Toronto's African and Caribbean communities.

We are at an important time in the political and social history of our city, province and nation; one in which attention and discourse are focused on key issues that impact African Canadians with respect to equity, access to opportunity, and the dismantling of systemic barriers that are grounded in anti-Black racism. Through its proposed action plan, the City of Toronto has taken a bold step forward in addressing these concerns.

We are encouraged by the recommendation to establish an Anti-Black Racism Partnership and Accountability Circle to support implementation of the plan, something that was strongly advocated for by community members and organizations including the JCA when the interim plan came to Executive Committee this past June. This is a journey that the City and Toronto's African Canadian communities must travel together, and that includes enabling a platform for continuous dialogue and oversight. It is also encouraging that Work Plan priorities for 2018 include:

- Development and delivery of a comprehensive mandatory learning program for City staff and members of the Toronto Police Service;
- Establishment of a Black Youth Internship Initiative;
- Investment in programs and services for Black Queer and Trans youth; and
- Development of a Mayor's Roundtable on Black Business.

These are good first steps towards confronting entrenched racism in key institutions, supporting the economic empowerment of Black Torontonians, and creating greater space for Black youth. However, critical issues remain that must be addressed. Primary among them is the need for the City of Toronto to work with other levels of government to officially recognize African Canadians as a distinct group within Canadian society. From the earliest days of our presence in Canada, African Canadians have been an integral part of and significant contributors to Canadian society. We have also, since those early days, contended with marginalization rooted in anti-Black racism, as extensively noted in the recent report of the United Nations (UN) Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and in the City Manager's report. Officially naming African Canadians a distinct group would provide further leverage to influence policy- and decision-making regarding matters that impact African Canadian communities, as well as provide concrete recognition of the UN International Decade for People of African Descent.

Lastly, the City Manager has recommended that the initial 2018 request of \$0.995 million be referred for consideration with other City priorities and included in 2018 Operating Budget Submissions. The allocation of sufficient ongoing resources to the Action Plan must be a non-negotiable priority of the Executive Committee and City Council. The requisite investments must be made to not only ensure the short, medium and long term sustainability and success of the plan, but also the trust of the community you serve.

Original signed by

The Board of Directors of the JCA
The Board of Directors of CAFCAN