

**City of Toronto  
Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism**

**Summary Report: Community Consultations**

**Proposed by:  
Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice  
and Toronto Metropolitan University**

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## **Introduction:**

For too many Asian communities in Toronto, anti-Asian racism is a daily lived reality. Now, more than ever, and especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to raise awareness of the challenges faced by these communities across Toronto and to confront and denounce all forms of anti-Asian racism, hate and discrimination.

In Canada, anti-Asian racism refers to historical and ongoing systemic discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by peoples of Asian heritage, based on others' assumptions about their ethnicity and nationality.

People of Asian heritage have and continue to be subjected to specific overt and subtle racist tropes and stereotypes at individual and systemic levels, which lead to their ongoing social, economic, political and cultural marginalization, disadvantage and unequal treatment.

While anti-Asian racism is something faced by people of Asian heritage across the city, it is important to note that the diaspora of Asian Torontonians are not a homogenous group. It should be recognized that anti-Asian racism is felt in different ways by different Asian communities as a result of their separate and often unique histories and lived experiences. Only through continued conversation and consultation, can the challenges of each Asian community be understood and properly addressed.

## **Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism:**

In response to the rise of anti-Asian racism throughout the pandemic and in an effort to create a more equitable and inclusive city, Mayor John Tory brought together a roundtable made up of East and Southeast Asian Canadian community members.

The mandate of this roundtable is to advise the Mayor, Deputy Mayor Denzil Minnan-Wong, Councillor Lai, Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and City staff on the challenges and lived experiences of Asian Torontonians, and to discuss and develop strategies to address anti-Asian racism in the city.

With the support of the Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ) and Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University), the Mayor's roundtable set out to facilitate a series of consultations with diverse East and Southeast Asian community members.

## **Overview - Community Consultations**

Throughout the Spring of 2022, members of the Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism led a series of community consultations, organizing focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

The lived experience and expertise of East and Southeast Asian communities drawn from these conversations is what has created the foundation for the recommendations outlined in this report. Additional insight and expertise from community leaders on the roundtable have helped to refine these recommendations.

The goal of these consultations are as follows:

- To better understand how people experience anti-Asian racism in Toronto, including through the use of City programs and services.
- To generate ideas about program, policy and other changes that can help eliminate anti-Asian racism and support the well-being and inclusion of East Asian and Southeast Asian Torontonians.

In consultation with the Mayor's roundtable, a clear, well-scoped set of consultation questions and a discussion guide were developed. These questions were designed to better understand how people experience anti-Asian racism in Toronto, including in programs and services delivered by the City of Toronto.

The community consultations were divided in two parts - focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

The focus group discussions used a local consultant model. Community organizations from the Mayor's roundtable were engaged to consult with their constituents in the language of their choice. These focus groups ranged in size from 6-10 participants.

In addition to the focus group discussions, a list of key informants was developed through recommendations from the Mayor's roundtable. The key informants are made up of Asian Torontonians in leadership positions representing diverse sectors and perspectives. Each key informant was engaged in a 1-hour long interview following the discussion guide established by the Mayor's roundtable.

Drawing on the preliminary findings from these consultations, this summary report has systematically organized and collated the output of these conversations into feasible and evidence-based recommendations to support the City of Toronto's response to anti-Asian racism.

## **Purpose, Vision and Principles:**

### **Purpose:**

The ultimate purpose of this initiative is to develop recommendations to strengthen Toronto as a city in which anti-Asian racism is well understood and effectively confronted.

Through its recommendations, conversation highlights and key findings, this summary report lays out a path forward to help ensure that municipal services, spaces and policies become fully inclusive and accessible to Asian Torontonians both in intent and in practice.

In addition to this, the content of this summary report will be used by the Equity and Human Rights division to create an East and Southeast Asian community profile in the City of Toronto's Equity Lens Tool.

### **Vision:**

The vision for this summary report is to create a city in which Asian residents are engaged, accepted and included in decision making processes. This report aims to support a vision for the City of Toronto in which the knowledge, skills, talents and lived-experiences of Asian Torontonians are embedded in the planning, development and delivery of City services. Ultimately, Asian Torontonians share a vision with other residents for a more inclusive and equitable city free of racism, hate and oppression.

### **Principles:**

The facilitation of the community consultations outlined in this summary report have been guided by the following principles:

- **To engage and centre diverse East Asian Torontonians** - This methodology aims at maximizing the input from the diaspora of East and Southeast Asian Canadian communities within the time and resource constraints of the project. The process has built on our own as well as others' experience with lived experience of anti-Asian racism.
- **To acknowledge diversity and intersectionality** - While Anti-Asian racism is the focus of this project, intersectionality of racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression have also been examined.
- **To be guided by respect** - The confidentiality of all participants in the process has been protected.

## Recommendations:

Drawing on the preliminary findings from the community consultations conducted by the Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism, the following recommendations have been prepared. These recommendations are meant to address the challenges to wellbeing and inclusion faced by East and Southeast Asian Torontonians, while also highlighting the reality of their lived experiences.

These recommendations represent the views of participants in the current round of consultations. They are not exhaustive or comprehensive. They are a snapshot. Community and roundtable members are urging the Mayor and the City Council to continue community engagement to ensure that the commitment to addressing anti-Asian racism is sustained.

More importantly, many members express a concern that this report and all the recommendations will not be followed up by the City. The term, "*flavour of the month*" has been referred to multiple times throughout the consultations to emphasize the short attention of policy and decision makers on community issues. Unequivocally, community and roundtable members urge the Mayor and the City to commit to on-going engagement and sustainable actions to address anti-Asian racism.

The recommendations found in this summary report have been categorized under 6 major themes.

1. Children and Youth Development
2. Health, Community and Social Services
3. Housing Supports
4. Job Opportunities and Income Supports
5. Law and Bylaw Enforcement
6. Community Engagement and Asian Leadership

Each recommendation has been paired with a series of actions. These actions represent the feedback received from the various stakeholders and constituents who took part in the community consultations.

It is important to note that the recommendations, actions and themes outlined in this report are only a starting point. There continues to be a strong desire for sustained consultation and collaboration with Toronto's Asian communities to better understand and respond to the challenges of anti-Asian racism in Toronto.

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## **Children and Youth Development**

### **Recommendation:**

Advocate for better protection and supports for Asian children and youth

### **Actions:**

- Increase engagement with Asian youth to better understand their unique needs and challenges
- Promote safe learning environments for students of Asian descent by working with school boards to drive anti-Asian racism awareness and education
- Collaborate with Provincial and Federal governments to ensure that Asian newcomer children are well supported - especially when faced with a language barrier

### **Recommendation:**

Increase access to high quality programs and opportunities for Asian children and youth

### **Actions:**

- Increase investment in initiatives that promote and offer opportunities for Asian youth - including newcomers
- Support effective youth leadership programs within the City of Toronto - promoting civic engagement at a young age
- Work with and support grassroots community organizations that provide social spaces, peer support networks and development opportunities for Asian youth
- Ensure trauma informed care/perspectives such as impact of racism and intersectional oppression is embedded into all City run and funded youth services

### **Recommendation:**

Address the unique needs and goals of Asian queer and trans youth

### **Actions:**

- Consult with community organizations that support and work with Asian queer and trans youth
- Increase opportunities for Asian queer and trans service providers and community organizations to partner with the City of Toronto
- Work with parents of Asian descent, community organizations and youth to create relevant support services for parents of Asian queer and trans children and youth

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## **Health, Community and Social Services**

### **Recommendation:**

Improve the quality and availability of community mental health services for Asian Torontonians

### **Actions:**

- Develop community-specific and culturally appropriate mental health resources to address the harms experienced by Asian Torontonians - especially for seniors
- Work collaboratively with Asian community organizations and other levels of government to lead and provide a more robust offering of mental health services for Asian residents
- Support initiatives that address negative stigma around mental health and wellness, especially within Asian communities

### **Recommendation:**

Improve the effectiveness and accessibility of health, community and social services for Asian Torontonians

### **Actions:**

- Ensure cultural-sensitivity and understanding towards the needs of East Asian and Southeast Asian communities (e.g. understanding there may be discomfort or unfamiliarity with accessing services - therefore suggesting alternatives to services rather than simple rejection)
- Increase access to interpreters and language support across social services
- Work with community organizations to better understand language barriers for community members - especially when accessing health services
- Develop alternatives to online tools and processes to ensure those experiencing technological or linguistic barriers are still able to access services
- Work with community members to drive awareness and understanding of health, community and social services available to Asian residents (e.g. increasing signage, social media promotion, increased public messaging)
- Outreach, recruit and hire from diverse Asian communities to increase the availability of health, social and community workers of Asian descent in all services provided by the City

- Incorporate trauma informed care/perspectives (e.g. impact of racism and exclusion and intersectional oppression into all City operated housing, health, social, and community services)
- Support culturally-sensitive training opportunities for service providers and City staff
- Regularly update City directories with community-based services for Asian residents

**Recommendation:**

Address the specific needs of Asian seniors, newcomers and people with disabilities and people living with HIV/AIDs

**Actions:**

- Ensure that seniors of Asian descent are represented, consulted and included in the City’s Seniors Strategy
- Ensure that perspectives of Asian newcomers are represented in the City’s Newcomer Strategy
- Engage community organizations that represent Asian newcomers and seniors when developing policies or programs that impact them
- Work with community organizations to support better access to medication, treatment and healthcare services for Asian residents living with HIV/AIDs
- Ensure City services such as long term care and others for seniors are culturally and linguistically appropriate and responsive
- Incorporate trauma informed care such as impact of anti-Asian racism, exclusion and intersectional oppression into all City services provided for seniors

**Housing Supports**

**Recommendation:**

Improve housing availability and affordability to better support Asian Torontonians

**Actions:**

- Continue to invest in affordable housing projects to increase supply across the city
- Ensure equitable housing opportunities for Asian residents from low-income households
- Invest in affordable housing projects in low-income communities with high Asian representation

- Advocate for affordable housing opportunities in new building developments

**Recommendation:**

Improve housing and shelter conditions and safety to better protect Toronto's Asian homeless population and tenants

**Actions:**

- Working with Toronto's Asian communities, apply an anti-Asian racism lens to shelter standards and procedures
  - Ensure that shelter staff are equipped with the tools, knowledge and understanding to address the unique trauma of Toronto's Asian homeless population
  - Continue to address the state of good repair in Toronto's homeless shelters
  - Ensure Asian tenants have barrier free access to RentSafeTO program such as assurance of language translation and interpretation
  - Enforce bylaws to ensure compliance from landlords to provide safe housing to Asian and other tenants
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**Job Opportunities and Income Supports**

**Recommendation:**

Increase employment and training opportunities for Asian Torontonians

**Actions:**

- Recruit, hire and train Asian people to increase the number and retention of employees of Asian descent at the City of Toronto
- Work with Asian experts and community members to develop anti-Asian racism training and understanding for all City staff and leaders
- Support internal programs and engagements that offer professional development opportunities for Asian City staff

**Recommendation:**

Improve access to high-quality training and employment programs for Asian youth

**Actions:**

- Work with Asian community organizations to offer employment fairs and skills development programs for youth of Asian descent

- Increase internship and co-op opportunities for Asian youth within City of Toronto divisions

**Recommendation:**

Improve job quality and income supports for precariously employed Asian Torontonians

**Actions:**

- Advocate to the provincial government for an increase in social assistance rates
- Work with community organizations to engage precariously employed Asian residents around new job opportunities

**Recommendation:**

Support Asian-owned businesses to better compete and thrive in Toronto

**Actions:**

- Engage with Asian-owned businesses and business associations for outreach, training and vendor networking
  - Work with community organizations to revitalize public perception of Asian-owned businesses in light of the impact of the pandemic
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## **Law and Bylaw Enforcement**

**Recommendation:**

Apply anti-racism and anti-oppression lens to law and bylaw enforcement

**Actions:**

- Conduct a systemic review of law and bylaw enforcement system to ensure that anti-Asian racism and anti-oppression principles are followed by law and bylaw enforcement agencies
- Conduct a systemic review of the non-compliance of City's policies by law and bylaw enforcers including its Access TO policy to ensure that undocumented residents are not threatened by deportation when interfacing with law and bylaw enforcement agents
- Ensure that Toronto Police and Bylaw Enforcement officers are equipped with appropriate training when dealing with Asian residents - particularly those facing language barriers
- Ensure that all Toronto Police and Bylaw Enforcement agencies are representative of Asian and other racialized communities across the hierarchy

- Work with community organizations to better understand how to respond to the unique needs of Asian newcomers in Toronto
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## **Community Engagement and Asian Leadership**

### **Recommendation:**

Increase opportunities for Asian Torontonians to participate in City decision-making

### **Actions:**

- Outreach, recruit and appoint diverse people of Asian descent to City agencies, boards and commissions
- Work with the Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism to ensure continued engagement with Toronto's Asian communities
- Ensure that Asian voices are protected and amplified throughout decision making processes
- Provide supports ensure that language is not a barrier to civic engagement

### **Recommendation:**

Support and preserve City spaces, communities and neighbourhoods contributing to Asian heritage and culture

### **Actions:**

- Protect City spaces, communities and neighbourhoods that promote Asian heritage and contribute to the rich diversity and identity of Toronto
- Support initiatives that promote Asian cultural and heritage destinations and neighbourhoods within the city
- Ensure that communities and neighborhoods with strong Asian representation are not disconnected from community services

### **Recommendation:**

Invest in Asian arts and culture

### **Actions:**

- Increase funding support for initiatives that showcase Asian heritage - especially within communities with less Asian representation
- Outreach and collaborate with groups leading major community events and festivals that promote Asian heritage and culture
- Report back on economic impact of City-funded community festivals and events

**Recommendation:**

Celebrate Asian Canadian activism and promote the experiences and narratives of Asian Torontonians

**Actions:**

- Continue to support and promote public education campaigns on anti-Asian racism
- Promote City and community services that help residents respond to incidents of hate, discrimination and racism
- Work with the community to acknowledge the history of anti-Asian racism as well as discriminatory laws and policies against Asian Torontonians on the City's website
- Promote public awareness around the experiences of Asian Torontonians through narratives shared by the community

**Recommendation:**

Maintain engagement with Toronto's Asian communities to properly address anti-Asian racism in the city

**Actions:**

- Entrench the Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism as part of the structure of community engagement by the City
- Incorporate anti-Asian racism and intersectional oppression lens, not only into the City's Equity Plan, but also all other strategies, operations, and services
- Ensure accountability from all City operations and departments by committing to measurable outcomes to track, trend, and monitor progress on efforts to address these and future recommendations to address anti-Asian racism and intersectional oppression

## Quotes - Community Consultations:

***\*Please note that the quotes listed below have been included anonymously to protect the privacy of key informants and focus group participants.***

- *“There are some nuances about racism experienced by Asian communities. It is not necessarily in your face. One major difference is the reluctance of Asian Canadians to ask for help.”*
- *“During the pandemic, subtle discrimination had the tendency to show outwardly. Not only did I more frequently read about hate crimes or verbal abuse towards Asian Canadians, but I began to hear about incidents taking place in communities around me.”*
- *“We need more resources to support immigrants and refugees. We need to tell them where supports are available, and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services when they come to seek help.”*
- *“The City needs to work with organizations providing culturally appropriate services to provide regular cultural diversity and sensitivity training to public employees.”*
- *“I have a dream. I long for a cultural-friendly, age-friendly, dementia-friendly, disability-friendly, equitable, supportive and inclusive City for all. To do so, we need to listen to the communities, educate ourselves, reflect on our beliefs, raise public awareness, speak up, support each other, and work together.”*
- *“Marginalized groups are still not a part of the decision making process. Without proper representation or consultation, those marginalized groups won’t have a say in how the City addresses their issues.”*
- *“The City should review its hiring and promotional practices to ensure diversity across the board. They need to have staff who are reflective of communities in all departments and all program areas so that communities see themselves represented.”*
- *“I would like to see targeted and culturally sensitive planning and delivery of the services. I am glad to hear that the City is presently consulting the community. I*

*hope that it continues to do so and to partner with different organizations and community organizers to ensure that diverse voices and needs are heard.”*

- *“Anti-Asian racism cannot be addressed in isolation, nor can it be forgotten among other anti-racist efforts, such as anti-Black and anti-Indigenous efforts. It should be addressed in solidarity with all anti-racist efforts.”*
- *“The City can try to prevent anti-Asian racism through public awareness efforts, anti-racist awareness, and education. Through hiring Asian people to work for the City, particularly in meaningful roles of leadership. Also through supporting Asian representation and Asian culture.”*
- *“My vision of an inclusive city is one where more support is offered to marginalized groups. This starts by including them as part of the consultation, not just now, but continued and consistent engagement moving forward.*
- *“I appreciate the City’s efforts to address anti-Asian racism. I hope that they continue with this work so that more people can understand and be aware of the very unique challenges faced by our communities.”*
- *“The City needs a strategic plan and strategic priorities. Otherwise these consultations go nowhere. Staff need to build in quality improvement plans and methods to track and monitor progress.”*
- *“My vision for an inclusive city is a city where it is safe for anybody, regardless of how they identify.. A city that doesn't just claim to be diverse but one that supports, celebrates and protects its diversity”*

## **Next Steps:**

This summary report, and the conversations and consultations it represents, is only a starting point. The Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism remains committed to building on this work to ensure that the recommendations and actions outlined in this document are properly implemented and addressed.

In addition to this, the Mayor's roundtable continues to offer its voice and expertise in supporting the development of an East and Southeast Asian community profile in the City of Toronto's Equity Lens Tool.

Accountability and measurement are critical components moving forward. It is the hope of the Mayor's roundtable that progress reports will be scheduled to ensure a timely and accountability-oriented implementation of these recommendations.

Collaboration between the City and the community has been key to not only facilitating consultations, but also in developing the recommendations highlighted in this report. Continued City-community collaboration will be critical to implementing these recommendations and in ensuring that these actions work towards creating a more equitable future for Torontonians of Asian descent.

There continues to be a strong desire for sustained consultation and collaboration with Toronto's Asian communities to better understand and respond to the challenges of anti-Asian racism in Toronto. The Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism remains committed to this work and to advising the City moving forward.

## **Acknowledgements:**

The Mayor's Roundtable on Anti-Asian Racism would like to acknowledge the support and input of various members of Toronto's Asian communities who contributed to the consultations summarized in this report.

A special thanks to the Asian community activists, academics, advocates, leaders, organizers, residents and researchers who shared valuable insights and perspectives as key informants.

## **Key Informants:**

- **Joseph Wong** - Professor, University of Toronto
- **Alfred Lam** - Centre for Immigrant and Community Services (CICS)
- **Rachel Tam** - Centre for Immigrant and Community Services (CICS)
- **Deanna Wong** - Reel Asian International Film Festival
- **Bonnie Wong** - Hong Fook
- **Justice Maryka Omatsu**
- **Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp** - Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS)
- **Jiwon Chun** - Korean Legal Clinic
- **Jessie Tang** - CCNC Toronto
- **Ada Chan** - The Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC)
- **April Guo** - Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care
- **Mary Wei** - Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care

Additional thanks to the five community organizations who helped support these consultations by leading and facilitating focus group discussions with members of the community.

## **Focus Group Leaders:**

- National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) Toronto Chapter
- Butterfly Toronto
- Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) Toronto
- Korean Canadian Cultural Association
- Chinese Professional Association of Canada (CPAC)