

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

POLICE SERVICES BOARD

REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR

September 23, 2020

**Eradicating Racism and
Strengthening Public Trust and Confidence in Policing**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Board receive the summary of community feedback and stakeholder submissions attached to this report as Appendix A, and written submissions from Black community groups attached as Appendix B.
2. That the Board forward the attached summary of community feedback and stakeholder submissions and attached written submissions to the Chief of Police;
3. That the Chief of Police, through consultation and engagement with community stakeholders and the Board, develop an action plan to respond to the community feedback and stakeholder submissions and report back with a summary of proposed actions and/or recommendations in Q1, 2021.

Summary

The York Regional Police Services Board recognizes that racism exists in all facets of our society. The tragic killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis sparked a movement for change and highlighted the discrepancies that still exist in both the U.S. and in Canada. Clearly, there is work to be done in all sectors of society to identify and address anti-Black racism. It is important that we continue to take measures to ensure that the human rights and dignity of all people are protected.

As the governing body for York Regional Police, the Board must listen to the community it serves and be a catalyst for change, prepared to address racism in any form. The Board is committed to barrier free, inclusive, respectful and fair policing without systemic bias and taking action to meet that objective.

Background

At its June meeting, the Board received deputations from representatives of the Vaughan African Canadian Association, Parents of Black Children, and the Police Community Advisory Committee. The Board also received correspondence and feedback from members of the public calling for police reform and condemning anti-Black racism in policing. Many deputants provided their own lived experiences and recounted the lived experiences of family and other

members of the Black community. Submissions and feedback also provided expertise and valuable knowledge about areas of concern and proposed solutions for change.

On July 27, 2020, the Board Chair, Vice-Chair and Executive Director had a virtual meeting with leaders and representatives of the Black Community. The meeting, which was recorded and shared with the entire Board, included participation from the following groups:

- Markham African Caribbean Canadian Association
- Thornhill African Caribbean Canadian Association
- Vaughan African Canadian Association
- Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association
- Parents of Black Children
- Police Community Advisory Committee
- York Regional Alliance of African Canadian Communities
- Black Foundation of Community Networks

The purpose of the meeting was to continue trust-building between York Regional Police and the Black Community, to hear the community's vision for change, solicit proposed solutions and receive suggested recommendations for action. A summary of the community stakeholder submissions is attached at Appendix A. Written submissions are attached at Appendix B.

The community stakeholder submissions will form the foundation for future consultation and may be summarized under the following general themes:

1. Consultation, Engagement and Awareness
2. School Resource Officers
3. Race-Based Statistics
4. Response to Mental Health Calls
5. Police Budget and Resources
6. Police and Board Training and Education
7. Police Recruitment and Succession Planning
8. Transparency and Accountability
9. Improvements on Equity and Inclusion

It is important to note that several other police services boards in Ontario have also taken action to address racism and inequities. For example, the Ottawa Police Services Board recently passed a motion calling for the redesign of long-standing structures and systems that exist within the Ottawa Police Service to ensure that they are more equitable and inclusive. This includes establishing a partnership with the City of Ottawa's new Anti-Racism Secretariat to ensure that the Police Service considers leading practices to address systemic racism.

As well, the Toronto Police Services Board recently tabled a report in August, 2020 entitled, "Police Reform in Toronto: Systemic Racism, Alternative Community Safety and Crisis Response Models and Building new Confidence in Public Safety". This report addresses many of the same issues.

ANALYSIS

The Ontario Human Rights Commission defines systemic racism as "patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or

perpetuate disadvantage for racialized persons." It goes without saying that systemic racism has a devastating impact if it serves to deny members of our diverse communities the equal opportunity to succeed.

In recent months, there has been a greater recognition of the need for municipalities, police boards and police services, among others, to address the concerns of the Black community in a direct and rigorous way. The leadership of the Board will be critical in identifying and monitoring the plans and actions required to address the concerns and to ensure that the right change happens, in the right way.

For many years, the Board and York Regional Police have been leaders in promoting diversity and in creating strong relationships with the many communities in York Region. Active steps have been taken to eradicate racism and to support and enhance relationships with our many diverse communities.

To support that work, the Board and York Regional Police will remain committed to the following principles that govern the equitable and fair treatment of members of the public and members of YRP:

- Demanding adherence to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*;
- Delivering police services in a manner that is respectful, equitable, inclusive and without discrimination and harassment based on any prohibited ground, including age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, sex, or sexual orientation;
- Ensuring that all York Regional Police members and volunteers work in an environment without discrimination and harassment as provided by law; and,
- Building a police service that is proudly reflective of the communities it serves.

The submissions and feedback presented at the July 27, 2020 meeting by representatives and leaders of the Black community in York Region will assist the Board in achieving a more inclusive and equitable police service, addressing any systemic bias and promoting anti-racism.

CONCLUSION

Identifying, addressing and eliminating racism in all areas of society, including policing and the broader justice system, is of critical importance. The Board is grateful for the willingness of the Black community to speak out and provide the benefit of its lived experience and perspective. As the governing body for York Regional Police, the Board is committed to a process of sustained consultation and collaboration, followed by informed and resolute action, to achieve real and meaningful change.

Virginia Hackson
Board Chair

Attachments: Appendix A
Appendix B