

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Jamie Kramer, Accessibility Coordinator, Legislative Services, Corporate Services, jkramer@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	June 21, 2021		
Report No.:	Corporate Services-068-21		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: EDI Strategy – Hosting Public Forums and Town Halls

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive this report for information purposes, and;

FURTHER THAT Council approve the facilitation of public forums and town halls to help create the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy for the Town of Cobourg, according to Ontario Health Guidelines for COVID-19, and;

FURTHER THAT Council members from the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee participate as moderators and hosts alongside the Accessibility Coordinator, when available.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

PEOPLE: The Town of Cobourg supports and cares for the Social and Physical Well-Being of its Citizens

PLACES: The Town protects, preserves, and promotes its natural assets, heritage, arts, culture, and tourism.

PROGRAMS: The Town provides efficient and effective corporate, community, and business and recreational services for its residents, businesses, and visitors.

PARTNERSHIP: The Town engages in strong, sustainable public-private partnerships to improve the quality of life for everyone.

PROSPERTIY: The Town plans for, markets, and develops assets for economic growth and financial security

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

There will be public engagement as part of this endeavor.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline the public engagement portion of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, which will include Public Forums and Town Halls.

Alongside virtual and/or in-person events will be an online survey and forum on EngageCobourg. Various methods of communication around these events will be used to create the largest audience possible.

The goal of these public engagement sessions is to learn more about specific actions or programs the public would like to be included as part of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

Council Resolutions

On June 29, 2020, Municipal Council passed the following Resolution:

WHEREAS at the Committee of the Whole Meeting on June 22, 2020 Council considered a Notice of Motion from Councillor Emily Chorley and Councillor Adam Bureau, regarding an Equity and Inclusion Policy for the Town of Cobourg; and

WHEREAS the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the need for a reaffirmed commitment to confronting racism and removing systemic barriers to equality; and

WHEREAS fostering an inclusive and welcoming community is a key tenant of the Town of Cobourg's annual 'Pride Month'; and

WHEREAS municipal government can play a leading role in helping to achieve gender equality;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council instruct Staff to draft an Equity and Inclusion Policy; and

FURTHER THAT the policy specifically address the Inclusion of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, women, people with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit, Intersex, and Asexual peoples, as well as those who identify as pansexual, questioning, non-binary, and other gender and sexual minorities (2SLGBTQIAP+) community and other visible minorities; and

FURTHER THAT the policy draws upon resources such as 'Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities' and FCM's 'Diverse Voices Toolkit'; and

FURTHER THAT the policy includes annual commitments to Equity and Inclusion training for Town of Cobourg Staff, volunteers and Members of Council, engagement of citizens and advisory committees, and communications on progress; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to form an Ad Hoc Committee or a suitable alternative with a terms of reference or terms of engagement consisting of citizen

members from these diverse minority populations in order to provide input on the development of the Equity and Inclusion Policy, due back to Council on August 24, 2020 Meeting; and

FURTHER THAT the draft policy be presented to Council for consideration by December 7th, 2020.

On September 14, 2020, Municipal Council passed the following Resolution:

WHEREAS at the Committee of the Whole Meeting on September 14, 2020 Council considered a memo from the Municipal Clerk/Manager of Legislative Services regarding Diversity, Inclusion and Equity within the Town of Cobourg; and

FURTHER THAT Municipal Council on June 29, 2020 provided Staff with a direction to draft and present a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy for the Town of Cobourg that will encourage, promote, and insist upon awareness, equality, and acceptance by all residents and Municipal Staff in the Corporation of the Town of Cobourg; and

FURTHER THAT Staff recommend that the Municipal Council not only provide direction for a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy, but that Council engage and establish a leadership approach in responding to a call for more municipal action on supporting Diversity, Inclusion and Equity across the jurisdiction on the Town of Cobourg Community;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct Staff to create supporting governance structures with internal and external stakeholders from the Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, women, people with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit, Intersex, and Asexual peoples, as well as those who identify as pansexual, questioning, non-binary, and other gender and sexual minorities (2SLGBTQIAP+) community and other visible minorities; in order to identify and develop priorities, strategies and initiatives to support the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion effort in the Town of Cobourg; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to engage Cobourg's diverse community to help create potential draft terms of reference to advise Council and make recommendations to provide a monitoring and measuring role to help ensure that the Town applies a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion lens to its policies, services and programs; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to make an application to join the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (CIM) as a commitment to investing time and resources toward creating a more welcoming and inclusive community in which the CIM network brings together municipalities that want to improve their policies against racism, discrimination, exclusion and intolerance and together, the municipalities undertake initiatives to eliminate all forms of discrimination with a view to building open and inclusive societies; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to bring forward a report to a December Council Meeting or an earlier meeting presenting a status update on the recommendations approved and outlined within the Staff Report.

On November 2, 2020, Municipal Council passed the following Resolution:

THAT Council receive this Memo from the Accessibility Coordinator for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council reviews the draft Terms of Reference for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee of Council and provide input, as necessary; and

FURTHER THAT Council directs Staff to begin broad public engagement with the residents of Cobourg on the Terms of Reference for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee of Council; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to bring forward a final version of the Terms of Reference for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee of Council to a future Council meeting prior to the end of 2020; and

FURTHER THAT Council receive the timeline for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy development for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council participate in the “Initial Benchmarking” step of the development of this strategy.

On December 14, 2020, Municipal Council passed the following Resolution:

THAT Council receive this Memo from the Accessibility Coordinator for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council approves the final version of the Terms of Reference for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee of Council; and

FURTHER THAT Council authorize the preparation of a By-law to amend By-Law No. 008-2019 to include the Terms of Reference for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee of Council; and

FURTHER THAT Council appoints two (2) Councillors to sit as Voting Members of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee of Council; and

FURTHER THAT Council directs Staff to begin the application process for the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee of Council; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to consult with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee of Council on matters pertaining to the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy for the Town of Cobourg, including public participation; and

FURTHER THAT Council sign the Declaration to join the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities on January 4, 2021 as a commemoration to World Braille Day; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct Staff to bring forward initial budget amounts to be presented at the 2021 Budget review process for Council deliberations; and

FURTHER THAT Council participate in the “Leadership Interviews” as a part of the development of this strategy in the coming months.

Canadian and Ontario Legislation

Canada along with its provinces and territories has an exceptional system of human rights laws and ratified international treaties. Nevertheless, as in other parts of the world, racism and discrimination continue to raise barriers against the development of individuals and groups. Racism and discrimination divide communities, pose a serious threat to peaceful coexistence and exchange among and within communities, imperil democratic and participatory citizenship, and entrench and aggravate inequalities within society. Racism and discrimination continue to perpetuate the historical disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples and other diverse groups, many of whom are members of Canada’s most economically and socially marginalized communities.

The **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** stipulates: “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability”.

Under the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, “all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted.”

The **Citizenship Act** provides that all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, enjoy equal status, are entitled to the same rights, powers and privileges and are subject to the same obligations, duties, and liabilities.

The **Canadian Multiculturalism Act** provides that the “Government of Canada recognizes the Diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour, and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada,” (Preamble), affirms that multiculturalism “reflects the cultural and racial Diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (section 3(1)(a)) and that it represents “a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada’s future” (section 3(1)(b)).

Provincial and territorial human rights codes are premised on the principle that all human beings are equal in worth and dignity, and are entitled to equal protection of the law, as well as that every person has a right to full and equal recognition and exercise of their human rights and freedoms, without distinction, exclusion or

preference based on some or all of the following grounds: race, colour, ancestry, ethnic origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil, marital or family status, age, religion, political belief, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, or disability. Discrimination exists where such a distinction, exclusion or preference has the effect of nullifying or impairing such rights, and human rights codes prohibit discrimination and harassment.

5. BACKGROUND

During the Leadership Interviews, the leaders were asked their opinion on the best way to incorporate public feedback and opinion. The suggestions were a variety, including using EngageCobourg, sending out information via mailers, and with open sessions for the public to engage.

As such, Staff is working to incorporate all the ideas, feedback, and suggestions into how we engage the public to receive appropriate information as we move forward and create the specific actions for the Town of Cobourg to become a more inclusive municipality.

The spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation is below:

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

There are five (5) stages to public participation with matching goals. These are:

1. Inform,
2. Consult,
3. Involve,
4. Collaborate, and
5. Empower.

Staff will be using this as the guiding principles for involving the public in decisions moving forward with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.

6. ANALYSIS

To continue creating the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, Staff is proposing hosting three (3) open forum events to facilitate active listening to the public. Using best practices from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), the Town of Cobourg will inform and consult with the public on the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.

These events will be hosted at the end of July, with the proposed dates being:

1. Tuesday, July 20th, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. EST;
2. Thursday, July 22nd, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. EST, and;
3. Saturday, July 24th, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. EST.

These sessions will be hosted using Zoom Webinar to ensure that people are COVID-19 safe and include a portion that will provide a space for the public to discuss any issues they have had around topics of equity, diversity, and inclusion. In addition, this will ask the public about the initial goals for the EDI Strategy and what should be incorporated into them.

The sessions were chosen on days of the week that had the most active participants from National AccessAbility Awareness Week and times that took into consideration obstacles that may prevent people from participating. As much as possible, accommodations will be made and additional sessions can be hosted in the following week, if necessary or wanted.

A draft of these will be presented to the EDI Committee at their meeting in July 2021 after the completion of the internal staff survey. The information that has been gathered through the Initial Benchmarking, the Leadership Interviews, and the Internal Staff Survey will be used to develop these draft goals.

The goals will be a collaborative effort with Staff, the public, and community organizations that provide services to the residents in Cobourg. These goals will be the building blocks that will be used during the Visioning Session that Council and Senior Leadership will be participating in during the month of August before the draft of the EDI Strategy will be presented to the public for further comment in August and September.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

There are currently no financial implications to this as the software is already purchased and in use.

8. CONCLUSION

Staff is excited to be entering the final phases of creating the full Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy for the Town of Cobourg by collaborating and working with the public.

Staff is eager to learn about the public's needs and additional programming that may need to be put into place from these public consultations.