REPORT

COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 25, 2021

FROM: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy

DATE: January 12, 2021

SUBJECT: Inclusion Initiatives Update

LOCATION: Town wide
WARD: Town wide   Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the *Inclusion Initiatives Update* report from the Economic Development and Corporate Strategy department, be received; and

2. That the Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter, be endorsed.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Staff has been reporting on diversity initiatives and accessibility improvements for more than 15 years. In 2017 the town partnered with Optimus | SBR and conducted an inclusion assessment/audit for the organization, developed a corporate inclusion statement and identified five key recommended actions and initiatives for a corporate plan to support inclusion in the workplace and community. Staff provided a report to Council on progress to implement the recommended actions in late 2018.

- In the spring of 2020, protests began in the United States in response to the death of George Floyd, a black man who died after a white police officer held his knee on George Floyd's neck for several minutes. The protests spread across other parts of the world and Canadians joined in solidarity.

- At its meeting on June 22, 2020 Council passed a motion for staff to report back on implementation of the inclusion and diversity audit, initiatives already undertaken and further inclusiveness initiatives that can be taken. That staff report on employee demographics and compare this with community demographics and report on initiatives that can be taken to help ensure that the employee pool reflects the demographic make-up of the community.

- This report provides a detailed update on implementation of the inclusion audit and other inclusion initiatives already undertaken and ongoing by departments.

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 2

- This report also outlines work to be undertaken in 2021 to develop an Inclusion Action Plan that builds on progress to support a workplace and community where all feel respected and welcome.
- Staff is recommending that Council endorse the Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter (attached) and its 10 Commitments which will be used as a foundation for the town's Inclusion Plan. The Charter is an explicit declaration of commitment to the values of equity, diversity and inclusion and supports the local understanding of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, *Canadian Human Rights Act*, *Employment Equity Act*, *Ontario Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.*

BACKGROUND:

The town is committed to promoting a culture of inclusion by providing accessible and equitable programs, services and facilities to residents and employees. This is embodied by the town's corporate inclusion statement established in 2017: The Town of Oakville will champion inclusion through increased opportunities and meaningful engagement to support a workplace and community where all feel respected and welcome.

Over a number of years, the town has made several key advancements in this commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion:

2003: Council adopted the three key goals put forth by its Diversity Working Group: to develop a program that demonstrates the town's commitment to an inclusive environment; to identify and implement programming to meet the diverse needs of the community; and to consider staffing requirements to carry out the functions of dealing with diversity issues. In response to these goals, the town established an internal Diversity Steering Committee to encourage diversity initiatives and coordinate annual reporting to Council.

2007: Council approved a motion making Oakville a signatory municipality of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination. The network changed its name in 2019 to the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. This network brings together municipalities that want to improve their policies against racism, discrimination, exclusion and intolerance. In Canada, there are 82 municipalities that have joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. Being a signatory municipality has helped demonstrate the town's commitment to promoting a culture of inclusion.

2012: the town established its first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2012-2017 to outline the actions the town would take to meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for*

Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), prevent and remove barriers, and the timeframe. A Corporate Accessibility Steering Committee was established to work on the town's plan and ensure the town met its requirements under the *AODA*.

2014: the town established an Age-Friendly Committee to lead the age-friendly baseline assessment initiative comprising staff, members of Council and a community member. The concept of age-friendly was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002 in response to the aging population.

2016: staff began working with members of the Indigenous community on opportunities for the town to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation process to highlight and advance Indigenous history, heritage and contributions to the Oakville community.

2017: the town partnered with Optimus | SBR and conducted an inclusion audit of town programs, services, practices, and policies, developed a corporate inclusion statement and identified five key recommended actions and initiatives for a corporate plan to support inclusion in the workplace and community.

Also in 2017, the town established a Corporate Inclusion Advisory Group, bringing the town's existing staff committees on diversity, accessibility, and age-friendly under one advisory group to better align town efforts to support inclusion. The committee reported to the Office of the CAO with representatives from all town commissions to ensure legislative and corporate requirements were planned and implemented.

The town also launched its second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2018-2023. The new plan builds on the accomplishments of the town's first plan and incorporates updated requirements under the *AODA*'s Accessible Customer Service Standard. The town is compliant with all requirements to-date, filing successful compliance reports with the province in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

2018: staff presented a report to Council on progress to implement the five recommendations from the 2017 Inclusion Audit.

2019: the town maintained its commitment to diversity and accessibility for its workplace and community, as evidenced through Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan key area of focus – Engaged Community: Foster a community environment that engages residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds – and the following strategic goals:
- To treat everyone with respect
- To have programs and services that are accessible

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 4

- To be highly valued and widely celebrated for the innovative and outstanding way we satisfy the needs of our residents and employees
- To ensure that our staff receives the same level of respect, commitment and caring that they are expected to deliver to the community
- To be the most livable town in Canada

2020: At its meeting on June 22, 2020, Council passed the following motion:
- Whereas the Town of Oakville is committed to promoting a culture of inclusion and diversity by providing accessible and equitable programs, services and facilities to residents and employees and,

- Whereas the Town of Oakville champions inclusion and diversity through increased opportunities and meaningful engagement to support a workplace and community where all feel respected and welcome,

- That staff report on the implementation of the inclusion and diversity audit, initiatives already undertaken and further inclusiveness initiatives that can be taken. That staff report on employee demographics and compare this with community demographics and report on initiatives that can be taken to help ensure that the employee pool reflects the demographic make-up of the community.

Legislative framework
The town is required to comply with provincial legislation related to equity, diversity and human rights such as the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Meeting these legislative requirements supports the needs of Oakville's diverse community and enhances the town's reputation.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Inclusion is about creating an environment where people have both the feeling and reality of belonging and are able to work and live to their full potential. It needs to be mindfully built into an organization's culture and into the employee experience through deliberate steps in policies and practices, and programs and service delivery that translates to healthier communities and improved social inclusion. Inclusion refers to the behaviors and social norms that ensure people feel welcome.

Diversity refers to the traits and characteristics that make people unique and refers to a broad range of attributes including but not limited to social, economic, racial, cultural, disability, geographic, sexual orientation, gender identity and religious factors.

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 5

Community demographic data highlights the diversity of the Oakville community. According to Statistics Canada's last census (2016), 36 per cent of Oakville residents are immigrants and one in four Oakville residents has a mother tongue other than English or French. The latest census also indicates that 31 per cent of Oakville residents are part of a visible minority, up from 13 per cent reported in the 2001 census. This is higher than Ontarians (29%) and Canadians (22%) that report being part of a visible minority.

The top 10 languages spoken in Oakville, other than English, in order of most often spoken are: Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Polish, French, Urdu, Portuguese, Russian and Punjabi. All town customer service counters have a tent card with the top 20 languages spoken in Oakville that include instructions for staff on how to use Language Line Solutions.

Other demographic information further highlights the diversity in Oakville. Accordingly, 52 per cent of Oakville's population is female and 48 per cent is male; the median age is 42 years old with 19 per cent under 14 years old, 67 per cent between 15 to 64 years old and 17 per cent 65 years old and over. Of Oakville's 54,875 census families, 81 per cent are married couples, six per cent are common-law couples and 13 per cent are lone-parent families. The average household income is $170,000 and the medium income is $114,000.

The Canadian Survey on Disability (2017) reports about 6.2 million, or more than one in five Canadians aged 15 years and older has one or more disabilities. Further, more than half of the population has a friend or a loved one with a disability.

With respect to the LGBTQ2+ population, the Statistics Canada 2014 Canadian Community Health Survey (first survey to include a question on sexual orientation) reported that 1.7 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 59 consider themselves to be homosexual (gay or lesbian) and 1.3 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 59 consider themselves to be bisexual. It is anticipated that the next Statistics Canada's census survey will include a question on sexual orientation.

An infographic was created to highlight the diversity of the Oakville community as well as to compare the demographic changes taking place since 2006, attached as Appendix A. It is available on the town's website.

This report highlights the town's progress to implement the 2017 inclusion audit recommendations and provides an update on inclusion initiatives already undertaken (Appendix B) as well as accessibility requirements to meet the province's *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (Appendix C) to support the town's commitment to inclusion. This report recommends endorsement of the Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter and outlines next steps to

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 6

develop a comprehensive Inclusion Plan in 2021 that builds on the work of the Inclusion Audit.

Inclusion Audit update

In 2017, to help advance the town's inclusion priorities, staff partnered with Optimus | SBR to conduct an inclusion audit of town programs, services, practices, and policies. Input was sought from community groups, the town's Accessibility Advisory Committee and staff to help create an inclusion strategy to drive future actions. This research led to the identification of five recommended actions and initiatives for a corporate plan to support inclusion.

1. Review membership of corporate inclusion advisory group

The first recommendation was to broaden the Corporate Inclusion Advisory Group's membership to better reflect the diversity of the community.

Staff conducted a best practice review of other organizations and an internal review to better identify groups not represented on the committee. In early 2018 the new staff advisory group was established with members dedicated to advancing inclusion in both the organization and throughout the community. The staff committee comprises representatives from a number of diverse communities including visible minority, LGBTQ2+, faith, culture, women, age/term of employment and staff from all levels of the organization. Staff on this group bring a variety of perspectives and skills to enhance inclusion in the organization and community through lived experience, work or volunteer experience and/or knowledge of existing/emerging issues and policy initiatives related to accessibility, diversity and inclusion.

To date, the group has made progress on several key initiatives:
1. Establishing a designated quiet room at Town Hall for staff to reflect, meditate, pray or take a mental health break
2. Developing a corporate inclusion lens as recommended in the Inclusion Audit and rolling it out to staff
3. Preparing an inclusion report to Council and the public
4. Exploring deeper community partnerships focused on inclusion as recommended in the Inclusion Audit

2. Develop an inclusion lens and review town programs and services using lens

The Corporate Inclusion Advisory Group developed an Oakville Inclusion Lens as a tool to prompt staff to think about inclusion in their work. The lens helps staff approach work with a new or different perspective to stay responsive to the needs of

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 7

the community when considering potential impacts of programs, services and initiatives on the diversity of employees and community (Appendix D).

3. Develop and implement a human resources plan on inclusion

The Human Resources department supports the town's transformation towards a more diverse and inclusive workplace. To achieve this, multiple facets have been considered and are underway or will be underway in 2021. Areas include recruitment, data and metrics, and training and education.

Recruitment
This objective aims to address systemic barriers and improve inclusion in recruitment and talent management through two key initiatives:

1) Promotion and branding: to attract talent from a wide range of backgrounds and develop a more diverse workforce. This includes partnering with cultural groups and organizations that work with diverse communities and attending community and employment events to support building an inclusive talent pipeline. The town posts job ads in plain language to attract a wider pool of candidates and sends job opportunities to a wide variety of organizations that target specific communities beyond standard online job boards. Staff have continued to work with Halton Employment Services to reach broader communities and attract a more diverse talent pool.

2) Recruitment and selection process: to continue to implement measures to ensure fairness in the recruitment and selection process. These include identifying and removing systemic barriers, such as policies and practices that reinforce unconscious bias, stereotyping and other behaviours. Some of the initiatives to improve the process include:
   - Inclusive hiring checklist
   - Inclusive forms
   - Bias-free hiring

Data and Metrics
Work to gather data and establish measures on diversity and inclusion will be undertaken as part of the town's 2021 action plan.

Training/Education
This objective is to ensure education and training is provided and ongoing for all employees and management in creating and supporting a culture of inclusion. The town is in the process of developing and/or implementing the following initiatives:
   - Corporate-wide e-learning based solution using the town's learning management system for both staff and management

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 8

- Training modules available through the town's membership with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
- LEADS Recruitment 101 training for new hiring managers to include a focus on inclusion and unconscious bias
- Ongoing education and training on inclusion and unconscious bias to managers and supervisors
- New hire orientation to include diversity and inclusion
- Accessibility training
- Inclusion checklist that evaluates recruitment and employment policies and practices to highlight possible barriers, ensure our recruitment processes are fair and transparent, and promote and support an inclusive work environment. The checklist is included in the Oakville Inclusion Lens
- Exploring a session on the experience of Indigenous communities with Reconciliation Canada

4. Explore deeper community partnerships focused on inclusion

The town partners with community organizations and groups on a number of events and initiatives focused on inclusion that connect newcomers, visible minorities, youth, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, LGBTQ2+, low-income and at-risk families and youth. The town also reaches out to agencies that facilitate broad social connections for individuals, families and groups. Some of the initiatives the town currently collaborates on include:

- Active members of Halton Region's Newcomer Strategy Group to support services and programs for newcomers
- Committee member of the Halton Equity Diversity Roundtable to develop inclusive and equity practices in Halton
- Co-chair of the Halton Poverty Roundtable; an initiative of United Way Halton and Hamilton to address poverty in Halton
- Member of local Truth and Reconciliation working group with the Oakville Public Library, Oakville Community Foundation, YMCA, and other groups to increase awareness of Indigenous history, heritage and contributions to the Oakville community
- Inclusive volunteer program at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts with Oakville Community Living to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to gain work experience
- Reading the Rainbow with Positive Space Network at the Oakville Public Library, a program that gives teens an opportunity to discuss books about LGBTQ2+ characters
- Seniors Working Action Group (SWAG) who provide community presentations on issues that affect seniors

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 9

Staff also participate on a number of town and regional groups and at events to promote awareness and celebrate inclusion.

5. Lead a community engagement process on inclusion in Oakville

This initiative will be undertaken as part of the town's 2021 action plan.

Progress made towards all five recommendations of the Inclusion Audit will continue as part of the town's 2021 action plan.

Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter

To complement the town's efforts, staff is recommending that Council endorse the Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter. The Charter (attached) includes 10 Commitments and will be used as a foundation for the town's Inclusion Action Plan. Its vision is to have an inclusive community where individuals are valued, respected, and empowered to reach their potential.

The Charter is an explicit declaration of commitment to the values of equity, diversity and inclusion and supports the local understanding of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, *Canadian Human Rights Act*, *Employment Equity Act*, *Ontario Human Rights Code* and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.*

The Charter was developed by the Halton Equity and Diversity Roundtable which is a collaborative group committed to building systemic inclusion and equity in Halton, of which the town is a member. Endorsing the Charter would form the basis for the town's gap analysis, laying the foundation for the Inclusion Action Plan. It would also highlight the town's efforts to take a regional approach in this area.

Inclusion Action Plan – 2021

Staff will take a comprehensive systems approach in the development of an Inclusion Action Plan. It will be led by the town's Corporate Inclusion Group, with support from a third party expert and involve consultation with internal and external stakeholders. This work will be completed in 2021.

Development of the Inclusion Action Plan will include:
- Gap analysis to identify new initiatives that support a workplace and community where all feel respected and welcome
- Best practice research
- Build on initiatives already undertaken and recommendations of the Inclusion Audit

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 10

- Survey employee demographics and compare results to community demographics
- Establish diversity and inclusion measures to assess and benchmark for performance
- Engage community groups regarding town programs and services with an inclusion lens
- Initiate a community engagement process focused on inclusion with the goal to reach diverse Oakville residents and organizations; engagement will be broad to include opportunities for the community to participate
- Initiate a policy review to further support inclusion in the workplace and action support.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A)   PUBLIC
The town will continue to engage members of the diverse community we serve and seek opportunities to partner with organizations that represent diverse groups to ensure our programs and services meet the needs of our community.

(B)   FINANCIAL
Funding for a partnership with a third party expert is included in the 2020 budget. Other financial impacts are managed within existing departmental budgets.

(C)   IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS
All town departments are involved in promoting and championing inclusion.

(D)   CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS
This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:
• provide outstanding service to our residents and businesses
• treat everyone with respect
• show respect and commitment to employees
• enhance our cultural environment
• be the most livable town in Canada

(E)   COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY
Celebrating diversity and inclusion in the workplace and community is a key factor in establishing community sustainability. Research demonstrates that involved and engaged staff and citizens lead to higher levels of satisfaction with government and with quality of life.

COUNCIL MEETING
From: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Inclusion Initiatives Update

Page 11

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Look How We've Changed infographic
Appendix B – Inclusion Initiatives by department
Appendix C – 2020 Accessibility Annual Status Update
Appendix D – Oakville Inclusion Lens
Appendix E – Halton Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Charter

Prepared by:
Rebecca Brookes
Supervisor, Strategic Initiatives
Economic Development and Corporate
Strategy

Submitted by:
Dorothy St. George
Director
Economic Development and Corporate
Strategy