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**Item No. 15.1.6**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**April 29, 2025**

**TO:** Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**FROM:** Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**SUBJECT:** **Dismantling Racism and Hate Update**

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**ORIGIN**

The province of Nova Scotia introduced the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act (Bill No. 96) in March 2022, which was passed into law in April 2022. This legislation reflects the provincial government's commitment to addressing systemic racism, hate, and inequity across Nova Scotia. The Act was developed through the collaboration of an all-party committee and was informed by extensive engagement with marginalized and racialized communities.

The Dismantling Racism and Hate Act recognizes that systemic hate, inequity, and racism are often reinforced by government and public body policies and practices, even when they appear neutral. The Act establishes a framework for eliminating these barriers by mandating all prescribed public bodies to create and implement anti-racism and equity plans. Regulations to support the Act were enacted in July 2024, prescribing HRM and other municipalities as public bodies, effective April 1, 2025. The province has not yet prescribed any required form, content or other aspect for such plans.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Dismantling Racism and Hate Act (Bill No. 96) mandates that the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) develop a plan to address systemic hate, inequity and racism. This plan will outline HRM's approach to eliminating systemic hate and inequity within the municipality and will align with the provincial government's broader commitment to addressing racism and discrimination.

The final plan will include:

- Targeted Initiatives: Specific actions to address systemic hate and inequity, including the anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism.
- Equity and Inclusion Measures: Concrete steps to address discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.
- Public Accountability: Clear reporting requirements and measurable indicators to track and evaluate progress.
- Community Engagement: A structured framework for meaningful engagement with marginalized and racialized communities to ensure their voices and experiences shape the strategy.

This report provides an update on the development of the strategy and next steps. The strategy will build on HRM's existing equity and diversity initiatives while strengthening the municipality's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all residents.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council

1. Approve the attached draft outline as the framework to guide the development of a Dismantling Racism and Hate Plan and direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to task the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) with leading the development of the plan, in collaboration with internal business units and external community partners.

## **BACKGROUND**

Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO has already made significant progress in advancing equity and anti-racism through several existing strategies, including the Accessibility Strategy, Immigrant Services Strategy, French Language Strategy, and the Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. These strategies have laid the foundation for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within HRM's policies, programs, and services.

The new Dismantling Racism and Hate Plan will build upon these existing efforts, aligning with the provincial mandate under the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act. This plan will strengthen HRM's commitment to eliminating systemic barriers, addressing inequities, and fostering a more inclusive municipality. By integrating lessons learned from existing strategies and aligning with the provincial framework, HRM will enhance its ability to respond effectively to systemic racism and discrimination within the municipality.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Dismantling Racism and Hate Act (Bill No. 96) mandates that all prescribed public bodies shall create a plan to address systemic hate, inequity and racism with the form and content and by the date prescribed. This legislation was introduced in March 2022 and passed into law in April 2022 following the work of an all-party committee and extensive engagement with marginalized and racialized communities. Regulations to support the Act were enacted in July 2024, prescribing HRM and other municipalities as public bodies, effective April 1, 2025.

HRM's plan will address systemic racism, hate, and inequity through targeted actions aligned with the Act's core principles and focus areas including:

- **Leadership and Commitment:** Demonstrating HRM's commitment to equity and anti-racism through concrete action and transparent accountability.
- **Policy and Structural Change:** Strengthening HRM's internal policies and practices to eliminate systemic barriers and inequities.
- **Community Engagement:** Establishing and sustaining meaningful partnerships with marginalized and racialized communities to ensure their perspectives shape the strategy.
- **Public Accountability:** Implementing measurable indicators and a structured reporting framework to monitor and communicate progress.
- **Centralized Approach:** The plan acts as the overarching framework guiding all diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.
- **Action-Oriented:** Specific, measurable actions tailored to various marginalized groups.
- **Integration & Accountability:** Business units collaborate with Advisors to determine annual goals while adhering to broader accessibility and inclusion strategies.
- **Council Engagement:** Provide an annual update to Council. Additional updates can be provided through information reports as needed.
- **Prioritizing Training & Onboarding:** Training will be a core part of the onboarding process for all new employees, ensuring they understand HRM's commitment to equity and anti-racism from

day one. Training sessions will also be required for existing employees to reinforce these principles and foster a culture of continuous learning.

The plan outline (see attachment 1) will include specific initiatives to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and will extend to discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and disability.

HRM's approach to developing the final plan will reflect the Act's focus on intersectionality — recognizing how overlapping identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) shape individual experiences of discrimination. The plan will aim to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and supported.

In developing the plan, HRM will consider past engagements, engage with key stakeholders, including community leaders, advocacy groups, and HRM's internal Diversity and Inclusion network. The plan will build on existing Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO frameworks, such as the Accessibility Strategy, Immigrant Services Strategy, French Language Strategy, and the Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, ensuring a cohesive and integrated approach to equity and inclusion.

The successful implementation of this strategy will require ongoing evaluation and adjustments based on community feedback and measurable outcomes. HRM will provide regular updates to Regional Council to ensure transparency and alignment with the provincial mandate.

The Municipality is committed to fostering an inclusive, hate-free society where all residents can thrive. Through the Dismantling Racism & Hate Plan, we are building a future that reflects equity, justice, and respect for all communities.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The attached draft outlines potential action that could be incorporated into the final strategy. Actions will need to be costed out in partnership with identified business and included in future budget planning.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

No risk considerations were identified

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Embedded in the development of existing strategies, will be included as part of the community review of the new plan.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

No environmental implications were identified

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Regional Council could choose not to approve the recommendation. This would risk the municipality not being in compliance with the requirements of Dismantling Racism and Hate Act (Bill No. 96) to create a plan to address systemic hate, inequity and racism.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

***Dismantling Racism and Hate Act, SNS 2022, c. 3:***

- 9** All prescribed public bodies shall create a plan to address systemic hate, inequity and racism with the form and content and by the date prescribed.

***Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, SNS 2008, c 39:***

- 34 (1)** The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.

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- (3)** The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 - Proposed Draft Outline of Dismantling Racism and Hate Strategy

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# Dismantling Racism And Hate Plan (Proposed Outline)

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March 2025



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## Section 1 Background

In April 2022, the Province of Nova Scotia passed the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act (Bill No. 96). This legislation reflects the provincial government's commitment to addressing systemic racism, hate, and inequity across Nova Scotia and requires prescribed public bodies to create a plan to address systemic hate, inequity and racism with the form and content and by the date prescribed. The province enacted regulations in July 2024, prescribing HRM and other municipalities as public bodies effective April 1, 2025. The province has not yet prescribed any specific form or content for such plans.

This report outlines Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) proposed approach to developing an anti-racism and hate plan in line with this legislation.

The Municipality has made important strides in fostering safer, more equitable and inclusive spaces for all. The Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO leads a broad range of initiatives that advance the municipality's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Further, all business units contribute to and lead efforts, strategies and plans that advance these goals across the organization and in our communities.

HRM's Dismantling Racism and Hate Plan will draw from and align with D&I/ANSAIO's strategies and frameworks<sup>1</sup>, existing municipal efforts to address hate<sup>2</sup>, and key municipal strategies and initiatives led by various business units, to foster a cohesive, organization-wide approach to creating safer, more respectful, and inclusive spaces for all.

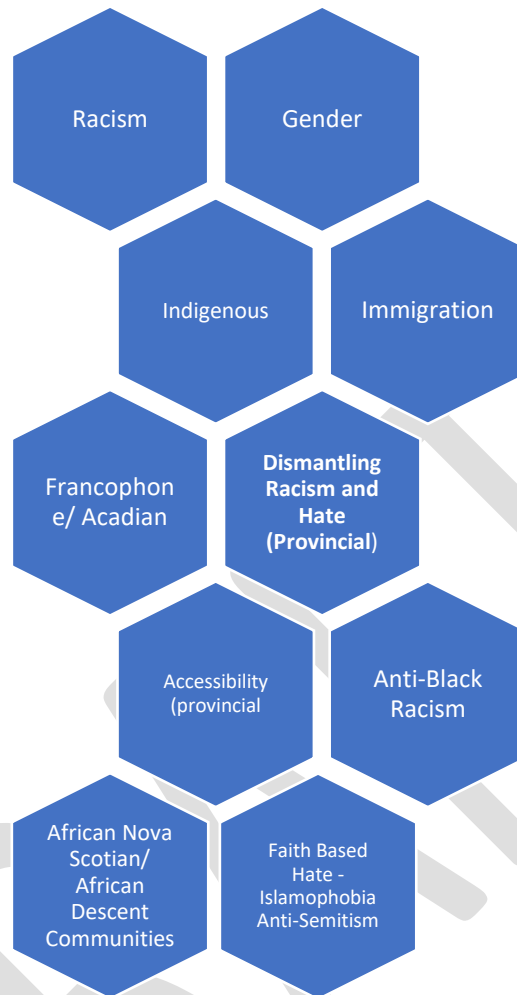
The Plan will build upon this existing work, incorporating lessons learned, community feedback, and commitments already in place. This plan will serve as a unifying and overarching framework that addresses all forms of discrimination, hate, and exclusion while working to eliminate systemic barriers and foster a more inclusive and equitable municipality.

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<sup>1</sup> These include: Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Framework, Accessibility Framework, French Language Services Strategy, Immigration Strategy, Cornwallis Task Force Recommendations

<sup>2</sup> These include, but are not limited to, Halifax Local Immigration Partnership's work to address hate, actions in the Public Safety Strategy, Halifax Regional Police's Hate Crime Unit and recommendations from reports to Council "Combatting Islamophobia and Improving the Safety of Muslim Women and Girls" and "Race and Gender Data and the Safety of Asian Women and Non Binary People"





## Section 2 Plan Components

In developing The Dismantling Racism and Hate Plan, the municipality will build on important work already underway across the municipality, addressing a wide range of equity priorities.

Current areas of work have included corporate training on anti-Black racism, accessibility, Indigenous history, and cultural awareness; fostering inclusive and accountable workplace culture; advancing gender equity and 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion; addressing systemic racism experienced by Black, Indigenous, immigrant, and other historically marginalized communities; addressing the linguistic and multilingual needs of the Acadian/Francophone and linguistically diverse community; and enhancing accessibility and representation throughout municipal services. These focus areas reflect long-standing community engagement, existing municipal commitments, and equity-related strategies already in motion. **As the strategy evolves, we recognize that additional areas of focus may emerge through further consultation and**





**engagement with equity-deserving groups** to ensure the strategy meaningfully addresses **all forms of hate, racism, and exclusion** across our communities.

## Section 3 Strategic Implementation and Accountability

The strategic implementation and accountability of the Dismantling Racism and Hate Plan is critical as they provide the foundation needed to create lasting, systemic change. Aligning municipal policies with equity-based best practices ensures that the organization's structures and decisions actively work against racism, discrimination, and exclusion. Ongoing and meaningful community engagement and partnerships will ensure the strategy is grounded in lived experience and shaped by those most impacted. A strong monitoring and accountability framework will enable HRM to track progress, evaluate impact, and adapt actions as needed to remain responsive and effective. Finally, institutionalizing training and development embeds a culture of learning and equity within the organization, equipping staff at all levels with the knowledge and tools to support an inclusive and respectful municipality. Together, these components ensure that the strategy is not only well-developed but actively lived and sustained across all areas of the municipality.

- **Policy & Legislative Recommendations:** Aligning municipal policies with equity-based best practices.
- **Community Engagement & Partnerships:** Strengthening collaboration with community organizations and other community partners.
- **Monitoring & Accountability Framework:** Ensuring consistent progress tracking of Strategy actions and adapting approaches to meet the evolving needs of community.
- **Institutionalizing Training & Development:** HRM will implement a structured training plan, making Diversity & Inclusion education a key requirement during onboarding and an ongoing professional development priority.

## Section 4 Measuring Impact and Progress

Measuring impact and progress is essential to the success and sustainability of the Dismantling Racism and Hate Plan. As part of the Plan, the municipality will develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that meaningfully reflect and, assess important factors such as workforce representation, inclusion outcomes, and equitable access to services. These indicators will provide a tangible way to evaluate whether the plan is meeting its goals and where adjustments may be needed.

Transparent reporting, including annual updates to Regional Council and additional reporting as necessary, this will support accountability both internally and externally, reinforcing trust and organizational integrity.

The inclusion of continuous improvement strategies allows the strategy to remain flexible and responsive to evolving community needs, feedback, and social contexts. Additionally, tracking employee training metrics such as participation and completion rates ensures that foundational learning around equity, anti-racism, and inclusion is reaching all levels of the organization.

These components will be built into the Plan to ensure it remains measurable, adaptable, and accountable, ultimately driving meaningful, long-term change across the municipality.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Regular assessments of representation, inclusion, and service accessibility.
- **Transparent Reporting:** Annual updates to Council, with additional reports as needed.
- **Continuous Improvement Strategies:** Ongoing refinement of strategies to meet evolving community needs.
- **Employee Training Metrics:** Tracking participation and completion rates of D&I training programs.

## Section 5 Conclusion

The successful development and implementation of the Dismantling Racism and Hate Plan will require ongoing evaluation and adjustments based on community feedback and measurable outcomes. The final plan will incorporate these elements, and the Office of D&I/ANSIO will provide regular updates to Regional Council to ensure transparency and alignment with both municipal and provincial mandates.

The Municipality is committed to fostering an inclusive, hate-free society where all residents can thrive. Through the development of the Dismantling Racism & Hate Plan, we are building a future that reflects equity, justice, and respect for all communities.