



MEMORANDUM

To: Regional Chair Emmerson and Members of Regional Council

From: Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: September 21, 2021

Re: York Region's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's
Calls to Action

This memorandum provides Council with information regarding York Region's approach to addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action, support to Indigenous communities, and proposes opportunities for an ongoing, sustained and meaningful relationship.

York Region is located on the traditional territory of many First Nations peoples, including the treaty territories of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation (CGIFN) and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. York Region falls under Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties with several Mississauga and Chippewas First Nations. There are also other land claims and treaty rights involving portions of York Region that have not been definitively resolved.

Background

Recently, the Federal Government proclaimed September 30th as the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, establishing a new statutory holiday for federally regulated employers and employees. The day is meant to help ensure increased public awareness of the harm caused by the Residential School Systems in our country and unite efforts towards healing and reconciliation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to create a record of the Residential School System and provide the opportunity for survivors and their families to publicly share their stories, promote healing and encourage reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The final report of the Commission was published in 2015 with

the Calls to Action intended to promote reconciliation and changes that could be made by all levels of government, organizations and the public.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action for Government

Of the 94 Calls to Action, there are seven Calls to Action that are directed at municipal governments, as outlined in Attachment 1.

Some of the matters addressed by these Calls to Action are not capable of being implemented by York Region because they are not within the Region's jurisdiction, the services it provides or are matters more fully within the authority and capabilities of senior levels of government. As a result, staff have focused on Calls to Action that most directly relate to matters that could be implemented by York Region.

Staff continue to assess all applicable Calls to Action to determine the effectiveness of measures already underway and consider other measures to further reconcile with Indigenous peoples in our Region.

AMO and OFIFC offering Indigenous Community Awareness Training

Building on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) shared by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), training is available to help build Indigenous cultural competency in municipal government. Live virtual sessions are being offered in October and November 2021 through AMO [registration](#).

York Region support for Indigenous Peoples

York Region has a long history of providing services to local Indigenous communities and peoples. Over York Region's 50 year history, staff have worked closely and in partnership with Indigenous communities to provide a variety of services, more recently including:

- Public Health supports and partnerships including breastfeeding clinics, healthy school programs, vaccine distribution, oral health clinics, beach water monitoring, food handling certification and annual Health Fairs
- Environmental Services support for invasive forest species, water conservation and partnership through the YRDSB Indigenous Learning Program at the Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre
- Development of the Archaeological Management Plan through a partner Steering Committee including representatives of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
- YTN extension of fibre optic cable to the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation through the Federal Connect to Innovate Broadband program

- Transit services through Dial-A-Ride and Transit Assistance Pilot Program
- Emergency response by York Region Paramedic Services and York Regional Police

York Region's Commitment to Inclusion for all Peoples

In 2018, Regional Council endorsed the [Inclusion Charter for York Region](#) which pledges York Region's commitment to establishing "welcoming and inclusive communities where diversity is celebrated and where everyone can develop to their full potential, participate freely in society and live with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination." Over 1800 residents and organizations were consulted during development of the Inclusion Charter for York Region, including representatives of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation.

York Region has collated and developed resources to assist with and strengthen the municipal relationship with Indigenous communities including:

- Education and awareness resources for staff
- Land Acknowledgement support
- Legislation and policy resources
- Engagement resources for staff
- Indigenous history and Indigenous engagement training
- Calendar to raise awareness about Indigenous faith, cultural and other significant dates throughout the year

In June 2021, York Region held its inaugural National Indigenous History Month (NIHM) celebrations, led by the internal York Region NIHM Working Group, consisting of Indigenous staff, who developed resources and organized two lunch and learn sessions on Understanding Indigenous Worldviews and Building Meaningful and Lasting Relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Most recently throughout the COVID-19 response, York Region staff developed training videos and tip sheets on Indigenous engagement, inclusion, and accessibility for front-line immunization staff. These resources supported staff to provide an inclusive and accessible environment at immunization sites. These strategies were used to inform planning for two vaccination clinics specifically designated for Indigenous peoples. York Region worked with an Indigenous agency to write communications/promotional materials in a culturally sensitive manner, organized and coordinated smudging to be available at the clinics for those interested, and facilitated the presence of elders and knowledge keepers from the Indigenous community to be on site and respond to questions about the vaccines.

Opportunity for a York Region coordinated approach to Indigenous engagement

Through the supports listed above, York Region staff have forged positive relationships with local Indigenous peoples to ensure access to critical services and a welcoming and inclusive culture. These approaches include a variety of activities that have been accomplished within current staffing complements. However, there is still much work to be done, and a sincere interest by staff to forge a path forward that is both meaningful and sustainable.

Reconciliation and continued development of trusted relationships between York Region and Indigenous peoples requires dedicated resource investment.

Through the 2022 budget process, York Region will be seeking additional resources to develop a centralized, coordinated approach to Indigenous relations. Staff will engage with the Indigenous communities to help inform what a centralized approach could look like, including, for example, the potential establishment of an Office of Indigenous Affairs. This Office could lead York Region through:

- Coordination of Regional Indigenous engagement (one point of Regional contact)
- Comprehensive coordination of York Region's approach to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action with input from Indigenous peoples
- Development of Council and staff training and Indigenous awareness and engagement protocols
- Review and update to land acknowledgement and other commemorative approaches to Reconciliation
- Strengthening the relationship with Indigenous communities to achieve and support shared priorities

York Region remains committed to creating welcoming and inclusive communities by learning from the mistakes of the past. We continue to move forward in partnership with Indigenous peoples by intentionally listening and learning from the past while supporting ongoing, sustained and meaningful relationships.



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment (1)
eDOCS #13281426