

Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination**Report Purpose**

To provide Council with information on high level actions that could be taken by Strathcona County to support the "10 Common Commitments" identified by the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD).

Recommendation

THAT Administration prepare, for Council's consideration, an Action Plan to be submitted to CCMARD, based upon the Recommended Action Steps, set out in the September 12, 2017 report, titled Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination.

Council History

April 25, 2017 – Council approved a Motion that Strathcona County join the Coalition of Canadian Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination; and that Administration prepare a plan, for Council's consideration by September 12, 2017, which sets out actions that could be taken in support of the 10 Common Commitments along with any resource requirements.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: A welcoming and inclusive community provides a competitive advantage and attracts a diverse work force and more opportunities for business. This aligns and supports Strathcona County's priority goal to promote Strathcona County locally, nationally and internationally as a place that is open for business and investment. CCMARD identifies improved economic life of the municipality as one of the benefits of joining the coalition.

Governance: Strathcona County Council has provided leadership for Strathcona County to become a member of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination, along with 71 other Canadian municipalities.

Social: Adopting the 10 Common Commitments supports the community's social wellbeing and several of Strathcona County's strategic priorities, including: increase public involvement and communicate with the community on issues affecting the County's future; build strong neighbourhoods/communities to support the diverse needs of our residents; provide a climate of safety in homes, neighbourhoods, and public places; and ensure facilities and activities are available, accessible and used by residents.

Culture: Promotes and encourages cultural understanding and appreciation, as well as supports cultural diversity within the community.

Environment: n/a

Other Impacts

Policy:

Legislative/Legal:

Interdepartmental: All departments.

Summary

Through the leadership of Council, Strathcona County recently joined 71 other municipalities in the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD). In becoming a participant in this international network, Strathcona County has agreed to endorse the 10 Common Commitments and agrees to develop or adapt its own unique plan of action, in cooperation with stakeholders. Through this plan, Strathcona County will set its priorities, actions and timeline and allocate resources according to its unique circumstances, and within its means and jurisdiction. It is suggested that members of CCMARD use the 10

Common Commitments to inform and guide their work as they develop actions within their communities.

These 10 Common Commitments are:

1. Increase vigilance against systemic and individual racism and discrimination.
2. Monitor racism and discrimination in the community more broadly as well as municipal actions taken to address racism and discrimination.
3. Inform and support individuals who experience racism and discrimination.
4. Support policing services in their efforts to be exemplary institutions in combating racism and discrimination.
5. Provide equal opportunities as a municipal employer, service provider and contractor.
6. Support measures to promote equity in the labour market.
7. Support measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promote diversity and equal opportunity in housing.
8. Involve citizens by giving them a voice in anti-racism initiatives and decision-making.
9. Support measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promote diversity and equal opportunity in the education sector and in other forms of learning.
10. Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and the inclusion of Aboriginal and racialized communities into the cultural fabric of the municipality.

In many ways, the municipality and the community are already contributing to sharing responsibility for respecting and promoting human rights and diversity. Currently there are a variety of programs, services and initiatives within Strathcona County, both as a municipality and a community, that relate to the 10 Common Commitments. These initiatives include but are not limited to the following:

Within Strathcona County

Corporate Values:

Strathcona County, in part, demonstrates its commitment as an organization in the fulfillment of human rights through its commitment and practice of aligned corporate values. These values include:

Integrity – demonstrating ethical standards and behaviours

Respect – treating others with care and dignity and valuing other peoples' strengths and ideas

Safety – ensuring a safe community environment for our residents

Fairness – treating everyone impartially and equitably

Cooperation – compromising when we need to achieve common goals

Treaty Six Acknowledgment:

In July 2017, Strathcona County Council provided leadership by approving several actions that promote respect, understanding and appreciation of the Indigenous community. These actions included the acknowledgement of all Council and Priority Committee meetings and civic events taking place on traditional land of Treaty Six Territory. The Mayor, on behalf of Council, will invite a member (s) of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations to attend a Priorities Committee meeting to provide information and share stories. As well, information on the historical significance of Indigenous people in Strathcona County will become a component of Council orientation.

Recreation Parks & Culture (RPC):

This department continues to promote and respect diversity and human rights through their programming. In order to continuously improve service delivery at Strathcona Wilderness Centre (SWC) and in Cultural Services, staff development around indigenous relations is offered.

SWC has been offering interpretive programs for many years that have cross cultural content. Gallery@501 has featured exhibits by Indigenous artists and will continue to do so. RPC also funds and liaises with Strathcona County Museum and Archives; their depiction of the history of Strathcona County includes Indigenous history. Indigenous programming is also included in all major special events.

Family and Community Services:

Since 2015, *Newcomer Connector* has offered local newcomers to Canada a free drop-in program that addresses issues identified as most important to participants, such as community resources, finance information and employment assistance. In addition to education, participants also benefit from social connections and linkages to other community services. The program has been funded by a grant from Alberta Health Services to support positive mental health.

In 2016 a *Welcoming and Inclusion Communities Grant* was received from Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA). The objective of this grant is to advance municipal planning and strategies associated with building Welcoming and Inclusive Communities. In Strathcona County, the grant supported increasing public awareness of diversity in Strathcona County and informing newcomers of services and programs available.

Community Living Advisory Committee:

This Council-appointed committee consists of community members who consider and recommend actions and propose policies that enhance community life in alignment with Strathcona County's social and cultural priorities areas and strategic goals.

RCMP/ By-law Enforcement:

RCMP monitor statistics and track complaints that fall within the criminal code within Strathcona County.

Within the Community

Settlement Services at Strathcona County Library:

This partnership is between the Strathcona County Library and Edmonton Immigrant Services Association. Based out of the Strathcona County Library on a part time basis the settlement worker provides information, orientation and referral services to local newcomers. Information and support provided may include life in Canada, improving language skills, education/job training, housing, transportation, immigration services and other government programs. Important linkages to community services are also provided, including community groups and recreation services.

Community Adult Learning and Literacy Society (CALLS):

Within the mandate of CALLS is English language learning, and as such they work with many newcomers to our community. They provide English literacy support through English language classes and conversation circles.

Other ways they are very involved in the community include the new *Red Flags for Low Literacy and Language Skills* presentation. This is a half hour introduction to warning signs that one might be working with someone who has low language or literacy skills. It speaks to specific issues that may occur in both short and long term support contexts. Some of the indicators of low literacy and low language skills appear as a lack of follow through or challenging behavior. CALLS educates the community that "re-gearing" expectations can be very helpful. In particular, when people with literacy and language barriers encounter

complex administrative systems, the experience can be extraordinarily frustrating and intimidating. Throughout this program, CALLS outlines specific strategies to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of staff and volunteers.

Strathcona County Diversity Committee:

This local volunteer group formed in 2016 and since that time has amassed a group of active volunteers who have planned and implemented several successful community events, including a blanket ceremony and local Heritage and Culture Day. Goals identified by this grassroots community organization include:

- To create a culture of acceptance in Strathcona County that embraces and grows from diversity
- To impart knowledge and offer social opportunities that stimulate rapport and friendships between all communities
- To build a united network of organizations willing to advance dialogue and action on diversity within their respective groups
- To create a space for societal actors from communities, schools, media, civil society and places of worship to promote diversity in Strathcona County
- To encourage County residents to move beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity within the community.

Alignment with the Social Framework

Strathcona County's recently passed *Social Framework* is based on an extensive community engagement campaign where nearly 8,000 people who live and work in Strathcona County shared their thoughts and insight into the social priorities for the County. Themes from thousands of responses surfaced that now form the *Social Framework* outcomes and have become a central point to align efforts for Strathcona County to achieve, as a whole. Two of the four community-wide outcomes are significantly aligned to the 10 Common Commitments:

- Connectedness and inclusion, where citizens are connected to one another and their individual differences are valued and respected.
- Safety, where citizens feel physically, emotionally and mentally safe.

Data mined from the extensive engagement campaign suggests the following:

- 88.4% of people agreed that it is important for people in Strathcona County to feel safe and free from physical and emotional harm, while only 70.3% of people feel that this is true now.
- 87.5% of people agreed that it is important for people in Strathcona County to feel like they belong and are connected to others, while only 69.8% of people feel that this is true now.

The following quotes pulled from the engagement campaign help contextualize what the data suggests:

- "I feel like people should just be more accepting of others whether it be race, gender or religion. If we all accept each other, we'll all get along much better."
- "Increase tolerance of diversity through education. We need to work on valuing all members of the community and their differences. Giving voice to people in Strathcona County who don't see themselves represented/valued"

The Framework's unique approach reflects the ingenuity of multiple agencies, organizations, government and citizens who co-created it under the guidance of a steering committee, represented by system leaders from various roles within the community. The intention is to shift how we collectively think and work on social priorities in Strathcona County and to

move from fragmented approaches of addressing needs to a systems approach that supports strategic effort to align planning, service delivery and integration across organizations.

Recommended Action Steps:

A review of actions taken by other CCMARD municipalities, as well as the Toolkit developed by CCMARD have been completed. The CCMARD Toolkit identified several elements for a successful plan of action. These elements are reflected in the recommended action steps below. As these recommendations are at a high level, it is expected that more specific tactics will be developed as the suggested actions evolve. At this point it would be premature to suggest resource requirements, but it is anticipated that it will be part of the regular budget process.

1. Creation of a staff committee

This is one of the key elements identified by CCMARD and many Coalition municipalities have on-going multi-departmental committees. Having representatives from key departments, as well as support from Executive Administration, will assist with internal coordination and alignment. Suggested initial actions for the committee include:

- identify existing municipal priorities and initiatives that support the 10 Common Commitments
- identify gaps which may exist in how Strathcona County is supporting the 10 Common Commitments; examples may include cultural and diversity professional development opportunities
- identify municipal opportunities to provide linkages and advance the 10 Common Commitments; for example, analyze applicable Strathcona County policies and practices

2. Alignment with the Social Framework

CCMARD indicates that an element for success is to link with existing priorities, initiatives and networks. The Social Framework represents an extensive community consultation and, as noted, two of the identified outcomes of the Framework, connectedness and inclusion and safety, align closely with the Common Commitments. In developing a plan of action to CCMARD, it is recommended that the Social Framework provide the foundation for this plan, as the Framework is moving into the implementation phase and two of the outcomes are closely aligned with the Common Commitments.

Implementation of the Social Framework proposes a new approach for addressing complex social issues (connectedness and inclusion, and safety). A shift in the way we think, behave and convene as organizations, community groups and individuals are necessary for long lasting change. Working in this new way will be supported by a *backbone* role which involves hosting processes that allow interested individuals, citizens and organizations to establish their path towards achieving the outcomes (connectedness and inclusion, and safety). Family and Community Services is transitioning to this role alongside co-convenors from the community, mobilizing change through relationships and *networks for participation*. Stakeholders will lead distributed networks that bring together leaders and individuals with diverse backgrounds to strengthen social ties, spark ongoing dialogue and create conditions for collaborative action to occur.

Additionally, an Outcomes Framework and learning processes will be established, which can link to the Common Commitments. Supported by the *backbone*, community leaders will create an outcomes and learning framework to support effective monitoring,

evaluation and learning practices in an effort to achieve the outcomes. Such practices will include aggregating and analyzing data, finding trends, and reporting back.

3. Engage and support community

- The Community Living Advisory Committee has identified that the Common Commitments align with their mandate and would like to make this a priority for their committee in the coming year. This will need to be confirmed by Council at the organizational meeting.
- The Diversity Committee's work closely aligns with the Common Commitments and they have expressed an interest in continued dialogue about advancing the goals around community inclusion and diversity.

CCMARD has identified that for municipalities to be successful in advancing the common commitments, they need to involve stakeholders. Both of these committees provide an important link directly to the community and have indicated their support for Strathcona County's decision to join the coalition. They have also indicated an interest working with Strathcona County in identifying existing programs, services and initiatives that support the commitments and to assist as new strategies are explored.

It is also suggested that part of Strathcona County's approach be to support, where possible, community groups and/or agencies that are enhancing the objectives of the Common Commitments. These tactics could be direct or indirect; for example, increasing promotion and awareness, and providing linkages with these community groups and agencies, where possible.

4. Plan of action and on-going communication with CCMARD

As members of the Coalition, Strathcona County is responsible for providing a plan of action to CCMARD. The recommendations above will result in plan of action, which can consist of reporting on work within the community that is already advancing the Common Commitments, as well as any newly identified strategies.

Additionally, CCMARD encourages members to provide updates of initiatives and events organized by our municipality. This on-going communication can be provided by the identified staff contact.

5. Increase awareness

- Recognize and support days with common objectives by making a proclamation at Council, for example Human Rights Day (December 10, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21), and Canadian Multiculturalism Day (June 27).
- When appropriate link Strathcona County's commitment to the CCMARD and illustrate the meaning of the commitment.

Communication Plan

A news release has been prepared confirming Strathcona County's participation in the Coalition. Information about Strathcona County's commitment to the Coalition will also be shared on the website. Also, as recommended by CCMARD, Strathcona County will promote its commitment to this initiative by using the logo or referencing its participation in this international network, where appropriate.

Enclosure

1 Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination Presentation