

Town of BWG launches Equity and Inclusiveness Review

Bradford West Gwillimbury, ON (*January 16, 2020*) – The Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury is launching an Equity and Inclusiveness Review to ensure that municipal programs and services are designed, managed and delivered in a manner that considers the diversity of the community.

The Town has retained Turner Consulting Group to lead the process, which will consist of two phases:

The first phase is an assessment of municipal policies to recommend any revisions required to reflect leading inclusiveness practices and compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. This phase is underway and will take several weeks to complete.

The second phase is a community outreach and consultation program focused on client experiences with the Leisure Centre. Residents will be invited to participate in focus groups, drop-in sessions and other consultation efforts in order to share their experiences when engaging with Leisure Centre activities, as well as within the broader community. These sessions will take place in March and opportunities to participate will be advertised shortly.

A final report will be completed and shared with the public in early summer, identifying any opportunities to adjust Town policies, procedures and training programs to ensure that the Town of BWG is an organization that embraces equitable and inclusive practices.

The initial impetus for the review stems from a ruling of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO), issued this past November. The decision relates to a complaint filed with the HRTO by two individuals who were banned for fighting in the Leisure Centre. Although the HRTO concluded that there was no evidence of deliberate discrimination on the part of Town staff, they stated that “unconscious racial bias” may have influenced decisions regarding the duration of the imposed bans.

“While we note that the HRTO determined there was no evidence of deliberate discrimination on the part of Town staff, we do take the Tribunal’s ruling seriously and we are complying with its direction,” said CAO Geoff McKnight. “We see this as an opportunity not just to meet the requirements of the Tribunal, but to take a broader approach in order to improve our service to the community and to ensure that we are aware of and respectful of the needs and rights of all.”

“We have the greatest respect for our residents and the diversity of our community and we embrace any opportunity to make changes to benefit the people of BWG,” said Mayor Rob Keffer. “We continue to be committed to providing welcoming and inclusive programs and facilities for our residents as well as a safe and respectful workplace for our employees and patrons of our facilities.”

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