

## INDEPENDENT ANTI-RACISM BODY ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

### Recommendation

That the June 10, 2025, Office of the City Manager report OCM03051, be received for information.

<b>Requested Action</b>	Information only		
<b>ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle</b>	<b>ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals</b>		
<b>CONNECTED</b> This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	<b>Healthy City</b>		
<b>City Plan Values</b>	BELONG. LIVE. THRIVE. ACCESS.		
<b>City Plan Big City Move(s)</b>	Inclusive and compassionate	<b>Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities</b>	Community safety and well-being
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Transforming for the future		
<b>Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-Racism Strategy</li> <li>• Community Safety and Well-being Strategy</li> <li>• Indigenous Framework</li> <li>• Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Municipal Response Plan</li> <li>• Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Action Plan</li> <li>• City of Edmonton's Art of Inclusion Framework</li> </ul>		
<b>Related Council Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 10/11, 2025, City Council, Office of the City Manager report OCM02612, Anti-Racism Strategy Update Report</li> <li>• November 7, 2023, City Council, Office of the City Manager report OCM02002, Anti-Racism Strategy Implementation Update</li> <li>• February 22, 2022, Community Services report CS00872, Anti-Racism Strategy</li> <li>• November 8, 2021 Community Services report CS00793, 2021 Anti-racism Grant Program Recommendations</li> <li>• October 28, 2022 Community Services report CS01365, 2022 Anti-racism Grants Program Recommendations</li> <li>• February 7, 2023 Community Services report CS01550, Anti-Racism Community Safety Fund Proposal Recommendation</li> </ul>		

# INDEPENDENT ANTI-RACISM BODY ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

## Executive Summary

- The City of Edmonton's Anti-Racism Strategy (2022) consisted of three priority actions: 1) the creation of an Independent Anti-Racism Body, 2) the establishment of an internal High Level Anti-Racism Office, and 3) operational and capacity building funding.
- Two of the three priority actions have been completed and updates have been provided in the June 10/11, 2025 Office of the City Manager Report OCM02612 Anti-Racism Strategy Update.
- The final action is in relation to the creation of an Independent Anti-Racism Body.
- An in-depth exploration of options for an Independent Anti-Racism Body was supported by two projects.
  - A community-led Advisory Panel met regularly to create a recommendation for Administration based on their research, analysis and engagement.
  - The Mayor's Office, alongside Administration and representatives from the community, participated in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative<sup>1</sup>, which includes a six-month intensive program designed to help cities tackle complex challenges.
- Significant work has been invested to build on the recommendation of the Anti-Racism Strategy and to provide City Council with three options to advance the desired outcomes of an Independent Anti-Racism Body: 1) A non-profit organization, 2) a collaborative model, and 3) a council advisory board or committee.
- This report outlines the strengths and challenges with the proposed models for Council consideration.

## REPORT

On February 22, 2022, the Strategy outlined in Community Services report CS00872, Anti-Racism Strategy was approved by City Council. The Anti-Racism Strategy outlined three key priorities for Administration, with the wording as follows:

1. **Independent Anti-Racism Body:** A community-driven, equitably resourced body that is independent from other city bodies (such as City of Edmonton Administration, Edmonton Police Service, school boards and districts, etc.) will be established to oversee anti-racism in Edmonton and have the ability to stimulate reflection on and challenge systemic racism at all levels in Edmonton.
2. **High-Level Office:** A new anti-racism organization within Administration will be created to challenge racism within the City of Edmonton corporation, including challenging systemic racism, developing a culture of anti-racism, embedding anti-racist action into all processes within Administration, and acting as a collaborative partner with the Independent Anti-Racism Body to co-create a long-term Anti-Racism Strategy and Plan for Edmonton.
3. **Core Operational and Capacity-Building Funding:** To strengthen grassroots, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-led organizations and support them to be more

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cityleadership.harvard.edu/>

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effective with work that empowers BIPOC communities, influences the greater Edmonton culture, and is linked to long-term goals in an Anti-Racism Strategy and Plan for Edmonton; the City will establish funding for core operations, capacity-building and other needs identified through collaborative decision making. The Strategy also calls for sustained anti-racism funding to community organizations, on an equitable basis.

This report will provide an update on the process taken to explore the creation of an Independent Anti-Racism Body. The June 10/11, 2025, Office of the City Manager Report OCM02316, Anti-Racism Strategy Update provides a fulsome update on the other components of the Anti-Racism Strategy.

### Independent Anti-Racism Body Advisory Panel

In February 2023, Administration formed a 15-member Independent Anti-Racism Body Advisory Panel (Panel). The Panel was selected through a public City recruitment process, and consisted of individuals with diverse lived experiences, representing the Indigenous, racialized and intersectional diversity of Edmonton. Over a period of 15 months, the Panel met roughly every two weeks with the purpose of developing recommendations for the creation, structure, governance and funding of an Independent Anti-Racism Body.

To effectively address the various aspects of establishing a new organization, the Panel formed several sub-committees. These groups were tasked with:

- Developing Panel norms and common vocabulary;
- Incorporating Indigenous and racialized wisdom and knowledge;
- Defining the organization's vision, mission, activities and priorities;
- Creating independent governance and legal structures;
- Handling staffing, organizational growth, budget and resource management;
- Carrying out public outreach and validation; and
- Overseeing the writing and review of the final report.

The Panel concentrated on organizational options that would create meaningful anti-racism impacts and effectively incorporate local community perspectives to advance systemic change. Their work involved reviewing and building upon the Anti-Racism Strategy's recommendations, studying comparable organizations and frameworks in North America, and gaining insights from anti-racism groups in Edmonton.

The Panel collected significant community input through online surveys, engagement with Indigenous Elders, and participation in anti-racism community events. These recommendations were refined and validated through public consultations involving more than 200 community members and organizations. The Panel also commissioned a report from EndPovertyEdmonton to map the local ecosystem of anti-racism organizations.

### The Panel's Recommendation

The Panel submitted its recommendation on the creation of an Independent Anti-Racism Body in August 2024, which is available in Attachment 1. The Panel proposes that the Body serve as a backbone organization for Edmonton's diverse network of anti-racism organizations, delivering three main functions: 1) Enriching Community Work; 2) Building and Sharing Knowledge; and 3)

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Breaking Down Systemic Barriers. The Panel also proposes that the Body administer the City's Anti-Racism Grant Program.

The Panel suggests the Body explore creating consortiums to act on priorities around:

- Hate crimes, incidents and victims support; and
- Intercultural relations.

The Panel further suggests that the Body itself should lead action on the priorities of:

- Strengthening the foundations of Treaty relations;
- Anti-Indigenous racism and reconciliation;
- Restorative processes in racial justice; and
- Racism in education.

Ultimately, the Panel recommended the Body be incorporated under the *Societies Act* of Alberta with a community-recruited Board, and not as an external Civic Agency of the City. The Body's relationship with the City would be defined through its funding agreement.

### Exploring Implementation of the Advisory Panel's Recommendation

Administration reviewed the Advisory Panel's Final Report and began to strategize how the Panel's recommendation could be implemented. A few pauses for reflection included:

- The priorities of "the Body" are a mix of immediate and generational activities, which will take time to establish, deliver and measure success;
- There are a number of non-profit organizations working in some of these spaces already and adding a new non-profit to the ecosystem could increase competition, duplicate work and hinder the ability of a new organization to be a "backbone" or effective convener if trust was not established;
- There are unresolved questions on how to form a community-based governing board to ensure "the Body" was seen as legitimate from multiple diverse communities and organizations in Edmonton;
- How to affect change in the current political and fiscal climate.

As a result of these considerations, the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative provided an opportunity to further test this recommendation with a new suite of tools to determine the best implementation plan.

### **Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative**

The Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative "provides research and resources for city leaders to expand their problem-solving capacity, build effective city hall organizations and improve outcomes for residents around the world".

In Q1 2024, Mayor Sohi was invited to be part of the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative Mayor's Program and appointed the Chiefs of Staff as senior leads from the City. As part of the program, each participating Mayor identifies a complex city challenge that is being addressed in their city. Due to the high priority this City Council has put on anti-racism, it was selected as the topic. Following this, cities were able to apply and, if selected, obtain additional support to tackle

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the problem more intentionally. The Mayor's Office applied for the collaboration track to advance the development of an Independent Anti-Racism Body.

Edmonton, alongside 10 other cities from around the world, was accepted into the collaboration track program. The team has been attending weekly virtual sessions since January 2025, and participated in an intensive week-long workshop in Cambridge, Massachusetts funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies. These sessions were curated to aid cities in tackling complex challenges which, in Edmonton's case, was in relation to racism and equity. This opportunity included expertise within the Harvard team and opportunities to learn with and from city leaders in the United States, Argentina, Germany and the Netherlands.

This provided Administration, alongside four members of the community, with a unique opportunity to build upon the work of the Panel and validate the models that have been proposed to date. The Panel's final report was the starting point for this project work and remained a reference document throughout the course. Ultimately, the Panel's work identified the priorities that needed to be addressed, and the Harvard Project was an opportunity to confirm the best model or vehicle to achieve those priorities.

The Edmonton Harvard team analyzed the original Anti-Racism Strategy (CS00872) in depth, alongside the comprehensive report provided by the Advisory Panel. The tools from the program helped the project team to get to the root of the problem, dissect the causes, and propose a number of solutions that could be tested to see which achieve the goals outlined by the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee (ARAC) and the Advisory Panel.

### The Bloomberg Recommendation

The team recommended building upon the priorities outlined by the Panel through delivery in a different vehicle, which is a collaborative approach with current organizations and experts within the anti-racism ecosystem. This would include an open application process related to work plan priorities and support from community representatives (including the Panel and Harvard Team) who would assess the proponents to select the collaboration partners that can deliver on the anticipated outcomes. These primarily relate to:

- Development of community-based education, data and research (both within the non-profit and post-secondary spaces) particularly in relation to understanding Treaty Foundations, intercultural relationships and anti-racism training and education to apply to the topics identified by the Panel (engaging youth, mental health, employment and hiring, workforce management, budgets and taxation, access to sport, recreation, art and culture).
- Working with partners (which would include police and local non-profit organizations) to enhance coordinated support for victims of hate, as well as collect and understand hate crime (and hate crime victimization) data to share within the community, which could also inform broader collection and dissemination of race-based data. This work could align strategically with other initiatives such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Action Plan, the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan and the Blueprint for Violence Prevention.

This recommendation also includes hiring a Collaboration Manager to lead ecosystem coordination and seek opportunities to collaborate with those who are actively addressing racism in Edmonton. This is an opportunity to work with organizations and institutions that are actively

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addressing racism in Edmonton and enhance integration and collaboration. The goal will be to work together to continue to address shifting needs as community-led responses mature over time. The Bloomberg Harvard team summary and recommendations are outlined in Attachment 2.

### Three Options for Consideration

After reviewing and evaluating a number of models for the Independent Anti-Racism Body, three models that would provide legitimacy to advance anti-racism work through various avenues have been identified. There are no other jurisdictions with an “Independent Anti-Racism Body” and all three models come with opportunities, challenges and risks. Attachment 3 outlines an analysis of each of these models.

#### Non-Profit Organization

Recommended by the Independent Anti-Racism Body Advisory Panel, as received in the final report to the City Manager, this first option is a model that includes the creation of a non-profit organization that can act as a convener and collaborator within the ecosystem. The non-profit organization would enable the priorities outlined by the Panel and work closely with the City, non-profit, post-secondary institutions, and Edmontonians to address racism across the City. The funding would be allocated to staff the organization with a small team, and provide a budget that would be directly provided to the community for community-led initiatives.

#### Collaborative

The second option prioritizes a number of key areas by working with a collaborative table of local leaders and the City to determine how funding is allocated within the ecosystem to enable and generate work related to the top priorities (education, collaboration and convening across the ecosystem, research and data, hate crimes, and increasing understanding of Indigenous perspectives and Treaty roles and responsibilities). Administration, with support from a Collaboration Manager, would regularly convene this group to pilot and advance work related to anti-racism.

The funding would be allocated to organizations that can directly and immediately begin working on these priorities. This process would be completed through an expression of interest (EOI) for current organizations in the ecosystem to indicate their interest and outline their ability to advance on work plan priorities. Engagement with community has outlined that there are a number of organizations (from big system players to grassroots organizations) that have ideas and effective approaches to anti-racism work. The process will be created to make space for the spectrum of programs to apply to be part of the collaborative. The EOIs would be reviewed by a panel of community representatives, including representatives from the Advisory Panel and the Harvard Team to prioritize the funding of programs, services or initiatives that will advance community-led anti-racism work in alignment with the priorities outlined by the Advisory Panel.

#### Council Advisory Committee

The third option focuses on reviewing Bylaw 18970 - Anti-Racism Advisory Committee Bylaw - and updating the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee's (ARAC) mandate. This update could include provisions for ARAC to collaborate with the City on advancing the Panel's priorities and to hold the City accountable for these recommendations, as well as broader anti-racism efforts such as

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the Seven Commitments to Anti-racist Systemic Change (described within the June 10/11, 2025, Office of the City Manager Report OCM02316, Anti-Racism Strategy Update), as well as the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan.

While ARAC's capabilities and effectiveness could be enhanced through certain changes, its operational ability to implement the identified priorities remains limited due to the processes governing External Civic Agencies under the *Municipal Government Act*.

Nonetheless, ARAC could continue to serve in an advisory role and provide a valuable forum for City Council to seek input, which is important to the communities involved in this process. These functions also align closely with the call from Black community leaders for meaningful structures to hold government officials accountable for the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan through a Council-mandated Civic Agency.

Greater detail about the three options, opportunities and challenges are provided in Attachment 3 Analysis of Options for an Independent Anti-Racism Body.

### Budget/Financial Implications

During the 2023 Fall Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment, City Council approved \$1 million in funding for the Independent Anti-Racism Body in 2024, and \$1.6 million annually thereafter.

Funding from the Anti-Racism Strategy was used to support the Panel process, including honoraria and engagement. The Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, at the Bloomberg Center for Cities at Harvard University, was fully funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Each of the three options outlined in this report would leverage the allocated funding differently, as outlined in the analysis in Attachment 3.

### Community Insight

The representatives of the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee, the Advisory Panel and the Harvard Team brought unique perspectives, lived experience and allyship to the various steps of the project. These representatives were in agreement that they could only represent their perspective in these discussions and, as a result, engagement has occurred in a number of ways including:

- Original engagement completed by the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee in the development of the Anti-Racism Strategy.
- The Advisory Panel's report on forming a new Independent Anti-Racism Body is rooted in the Panel's lived and living experience, and strengthened by far reaching community engagement that helped to refine and improve the Panel's recommendation. The Advisory Panel began online and in-person engagements in December 2023, including sessions with Indigenous Elders, reaching out to over 200 people.
- Commissioned by the Panel, EndPovertyEdmonton hosted a "Taking the Pulse: Mapping the Anti-Racism Ecosystem for the City of Edmonton" community event in April 2024, identifying

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over 60 local organizations working in anti-racism who were consulted on the Panel's recommended Vision, Mission and Priorities.

- In June 2024, the Panel shared its draft proposal with over 30 community reference organizations, and held 10 meetings where over 70 community members helped to improve the proposals and validated the recommendations.
- Upon receipt of the Advisory Panel's report, Administration completed engagement through a number of subject matter experts within the City including, but not limited to, the Indigenous Relations Office, Community Safety and Wellbeing, Social Development (including Community Investment) and the Office of the City Clerk.
- Formal and informal check-ins with partners and collaborators in this space to validate the direction and next steps. Administration met with the Panel after receiving their recommendation, and again before publishing this report, to continue the feedback loop and honor their contributions to this point.

### GBA+

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is a tool used to understand how different people experience policies, programs and initiatives. It considers factors like gender, age, ethnicity, disability and other identity factors. GBA+ recognizes that racism intersects with other forms of discrimination, like sexism, homophobia and ableism. It helps to see how these intersections uniquely impact individuals and groups which are inherently critical to addressing experiences of hate, discrimination and racism. By understanding these intersecting experiences, anti-racism efforts can be tailored to address the specific needs of diverse communities. It helps to identify and address potential biases or barriers in policies and programs. GBA+ encourages the inclusion of diverse voices in the development and implementation of anti-racism work. This ensures that different experiences and perspectives are considered.

In the context of the Independent Anti-Racism Body, the inclusion of GBA+ both in the creation of the Advisory Panel and the Harvard Team, as well as through interest holder maps and engagement indicates an intention to consider the diverse impacts of anti-racism efforts on different groups within the community, ensuring a more inclusive and effective approach. An intersectional lens and diversified experience was paramount to the creation of the Advisory Panel and the Harvard Team, as well as who they engaged with throughout their processes.

### Environment and Climate Review

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed, no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.

### Attachments

1. Independent Anti-Racism Body - Advisory Panel Recommendation Final Report
2. Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative - Summary Report
3. Analysis of Options for an Independent Anti-Racism Body