

Peel District School Board enacts new Anti-Racism Policy

By Zachary Roman

The Peel District School Board is taking steps to combat racism.

On June 22, the school board approved what it says is the most comprehensive Anti-Racism Policy ever announced by a school board in Ontario.

The policy was made possible thanks to extensive consultation with community groups and Peel District School Board (PDSB) students.

Stan Cameron, Caledon's PDSB trustee, said the breadth of consultation undertaken in the creation of the policy is what makes it so comprehensive. He said parents, students, PDSB staff, community groups and more were all involved and that their feedback was very important. He gave full credit to the people who put their time into providing the PDSB with valuable feedback, commending them for ensuring the policy was as inclusive as it could be.

Cameron said he wanted to see a policy that represents all students, families, communities and schools in Caledon.

He said he believes the 25-page Anti-Racism Policy the PDSB now has in place hits those marks.

Cameron said an Anti-Racism Policy is an important tool to protect all students and staff in the PDSB, so they can feel safe.

‘When we look at something that’s called Anti-Racism Policy?’ and we ask ourselves ‘what are we getting rid of when we do this?’ And, of course, what we’re trying to get rid of is racism, discrimination, prejudice, stereotyping. And that’s a good thing,’ said Cameron. ‘The flipside question we might ask ourselves is while we’re getting rid of all of those negative things, what are we filling our schools full of?’ ‘What we’re filling our schools full of are things like protection and safe and caring schools. That’s what we want to see.’

Camille Logan, the PDSB’s Associate Director of School Improvement and equity, curriculum and instruction, and student and community engagement. She explained before the Anti-Racism Policy was developed, a consultation framework was created so that communities most impacted by racism would be able to engage in the process of the policy’s creation.

Logan said the PDSB met with those it consulted at least twice, once for their ideas and the next time(s) to get feedback on the policy in its draft forms.

She explained in addition to community consultations, there was also an Anti-Racism Steering Committee ‘which represented multiple groups impacted by racism’ that met monthly throughout the process of the Anti-Racism Policy’s creation to review the policy in its different stages and see it through to completion.

Students were vital in the creation of the Anti-Racism Policy, said Logan, and the PDSB met with student groups and associations, student trustees, and focus groups of students. ‘We’re here for the students, so we need to make sure they’re part of the policy development,’ said Logan.

Information from students informed what went into the Anti-Racism Policy.

To Logan and the PDSB, the new Anti-Racism Policy is a point of pride.

Logan said for decades, academic scholars and communities impacted by racism have articulated that racism is systemic in

education and needs to be addressed.

?We're really excited that we've got a policy that hopefully is a beacon for other school boards to consider, to review any of their anti-racism and ethno-cultural policies,? said Logan. ?We want our classrooms to be welcoming and inviting for all of our children, and for all children to learn from everybody? this policy will invite that opportunity.?