

Region of Peel developing diversity, equity and inclusion strategy]

By Zachary Roman

The Region of Peel is seeking community input as it develops its new diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy.

On January 3, the Region announced it was creating the strategy and that community input and insight would be vital for its development. "Residents and community members are invited to participate and share feedback that will help identify gaps and barriers in the delivery of programs and services," said the Region in a statement.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy is planned to be in effect for five years before it's reassessed. The Region hopes the strategy will reflect the needs of Peel's diverse communities and Region of Peel employees.

As of 2021, there were nearly 1 million racialized people living in the Region of Peel, making up 69 per cent of the Region's population. This is the highest percentage in the entirety of the Greater Toronto Area. To compare to the rest of Ontario, just 34 per cent of Ontarians identify with a racialized group.

Since 2006, the racialized population in Peel has increased by 72 per cent. Racialized people include people, other than Indigenous peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. Caledon has the lowest racialized population percentage in Peel at 33 per cent, while Mississauga has 62 per cent and Brampton has 81 per cent.

Caledon is known for its large Italian population, and as of 2021, 23 per cent of Caledon residents reported having Italian ethnic origin.

Feedback on the Region of Peel's DEI strategy will inform the Region on how it should develop and deliver its programs and services to create a healthy community and inclusive work environment. The Region has three ways people can provide feedback on the strategy.

The first is by participating online by completing a short survey at tinyurl.com/ROPDEI. The second is by visiting the Region's booth at the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives on January 19. The third is by registering for a 60-minute virtual focus group on the Region of Peel's website. The focus groups will be held throughout the month of January.

Peel's Chief Administrative Officer, Janice Baker, said everyone has a role to play in improving the culture of the Region of Peel.

"Change will not be easy, and it may make us uncomfortable," said Baker. "The insights from the Peel community will help us improve diversity, equity, and inclusion, and will make a significant impact on how we move forward."