

## Joint statement from Urban Alliance on Race Relations and the Toronto & York Region Labour Council marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

March 21<sup>st</sup>, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, is a call to action. It's a day that demands that we organize in the name of racial justice and that those in positions of power reflect on what commitments they can take to eliminate racial inequity.

Inequitable access to housing, good jobs, transit, community services and over-policing affect everyone but the impacts are felt more deeply by racialized Torontonians. The band-aid solutions offered by previous governments did nothing to quell the magnitude of inequity in our city. This year, we have a unique opportunity to present our progressive mayor and city council with practical and impactful policy proposals, tools and solutions.

Our asks:

- 1) That the City commit to a yearly racial inequity audit of its programs and agencies.
- 2) That the City establish a racial justice advisory committee to report on the findings of the audit, propose changes, work with the City's programs and agencies to implement those changes and hold the City accountable to making them in a timely manner.
- 3) That the City convene a city-wide conversation on racism that culminates in a summit.

Furthermore, we recommend that the City:

- 1) Expand its community service offerings and establish programming for students between 3:00pm-6:00 pm, diversify its recreational offerings, provide supports and more programming for seniors, provide more spaces available for use by community groups, complete a review on what and where arts programming is offered, and establish a plan to address the disparity in access to childcare in certain parts of the city.
- 2) Commit to a good jobs approach for members of racialized communities.
- 3) Commit to addressing housing disparities for Toronto's racialized communities.
- 4) Immediately and seriously consider alternatives to policing with the aim to provide appropriate community safety services and decrease the police budget in future budgets, and set up and reinforce accountability measures for its police force.
- 5) Expand rapid transit to the suburbs and urgently implement the busway in Scarborough.
- 6) Apply a racial justice lens to its consultation process and its communications to the public.

We are owed a city in which everyone has access to affordable housing, good jobs, a safe and reliable transit system, robust community services and feels safe, not threatened, by our police force. We can achieve this through collective action. We are more than willing to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

But first, the City needs to commit to immediately laying the foundation.

## History of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Toronto & York Region Labour Council and the Urban Alliance for Race Relations:

March 21, 2024 is the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, when police opened fire on unarmed Black South Africans peacefully demonstrating against racist “pass” laws, and killed and injured hundreds of people. In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly marked this day to recognize the injustices at Sharpeville and the ongoing fight to eliminate racial discrimination. March 21st is now commemorated as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Our movement has been focused on challenging discrimination for many decades. In 1947 the Toronto Joint Labour Committee on Human Rights was formed. It led a relentless campaign against racist practices by employers, landlords and businesses, and its legacy is recognized through the annual Bromley Armstrong Awards. In 1975, the Labour Council helped establish the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

The Toronto & York Region Labour Council represents over 220,000 workers from diverse sectors across the Toronto region. Committed to fighting for economic, social, racial and climate justice, the Council works tirelessly to create a fair and equitable future for all.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations works with the community, public and private sectors to provide educational programs and research critical to addressing racism in our society.