

Statement from Regional Chair, Jim Bradley in support of diversity and inclusion

At last night's special meeting of Regional Council, Regional Chair Jim Bradley offered the following statement to councillors rejecting racism and supporting diversity and inclusion:

"First, our thoughts are with the friends and family of George Floyd. Much has been reported about this incident over the past 11 days and it can become easy to lose sight of the individual at the core of this case. It is important to remember that Mr. Floyd was a real person, with the same hopes and dreams and concerns that each of us have.

Second, on behalf of Niagara Region, I want to offer a full and unequivocal condemnation of racism and discrimination, regardless of what form it takes. Whether it is overt or systemic, there is no place for this type of behaviour in our region, province or country. This council, I know, rejects all forms of exclusion and intolerance.

As we all can recognize, we are not immune to the effects of racism in Canada. Racialized Canadians face discrimination based on the colour of their skin, their ancestry, the language they speak and the religion they practice. The incident in Minneapolis serves as a wake-up call to all of us to strive to do better. As elected officials, we have a responsibility to take lessons away from this unfortunate situation and take steps to build a region that works for everyone.

We were elected to make our community a better place for everyone, regardless of their race and I am confident we will do so.

Third, I want to highlight the steps this council has taken to ensure Niagara Region is as inclusive as possible.

Under this council's leadership, Niagara Region has been actively pursuing membership in the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. Our affiliation with this group will assist us as we advance policies that promote social inclusion, eradicate all forms of racism and promote human rights and diversity.

This term of council also approved the resources to create a staff position responsible for overseeing inclusion and diversity at Niagara Region. While onboarding this position was put on hold during COVID-19, I am looking forward to the resource being brought online and making meaningful contributions to our work.

While we can acknowledge these are just two incremental steps, they are setting the ground work for this term of council to continue to make progress on our mission of creating an inclusive Niagara.

With it being June, on behalf of council, I want to acknowledge that it is both senior's and Pride month across Ontario.

Niagara Region is proudly flying the new Age-Friendly flag and the Pride flag in the International Plaza and will do so for the remainder of the month. We support our seniors and our LGBTQ community in Niagara and I encourage you to visit the Age-Friendly Niagara and Pride Niagara websites to learn more about the events they have planned to celebrate the month."