



2SLGBTQ+ Ad-hoc Working Group Report

Report Number: C32-2023
Report Title: Final Report from the 2SLGBTQ+ Ad-hoc Working Group
Author: 2SLGBTQ+ Ad-hoc Working Group
Meeting Type: Committee of the Whole Meeting
Meeting Date: November 14, 2023
eDocs or File ID: 123538
Consent Item: No
Final Version: Yes
Reviewed By: Jeff Smith, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk
Final Review: Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report C32-2023 respecting Final Report from the 2SLGBTQ+ Ad-hoc Working Group take the following actions to support and celebrate 2SLGBTQ+ people, friends, family and allies who live, work and play in the Township:

1. Include Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) in the Township's strategic plan;
2. Advance inclusivity including:
 - a. Organize an annual pride flag raising ceremony;
 - b. Join the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities;
 - c. Provide EDIB grants during annual budget deliberations;
 - d. Consider a shared EDIB staff role; and
 - e. Provide EDIB staff training;
3. Direct staff to explore EDIB programming and partnerships;
4. Promote inclusive symbols including:
 - a. Pride window stickers;
 - b. Consider installing rainbow benches;
 - c. Consider installing community murals;
 - d. Consider installing professional mural; and
 - e. Consider installing rainbow crosswalks or sidewalks; and
5. Direct staff to establish avenues for continuing community engagement and feedback on the implementation of this report as needed.

Background:

Request for Rainbow Crosswalk

On August 22, 2022, Council received a letter from Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington Letter regarding a Progress Rainbow Crosswalk (see Attachment 1). Council originally referred the letter to staff to consider suitable locations but later further clarified their direction by passing the following resolution on October 3, 2022:

WHEREAS Woolwich council recognizes the need to reaffirm our commitment to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive township for all our residents; and

WHEREAS Woolwich council recognizes the need to reject all discrimination and hate directed towards any person or group of people guaranteed protection under the Ontario Human Rights Code; and

WHEREAS it is important to create safe processes for participation and for council to be guided by systematically marginalized and oppressed people;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Woolwich council direct staff to connect with community groups that can provide guidance with regards to best next steps that can be taken by the council and the corporation as we continually and constantly strive to make Woolwich a more equitable, inclusive place. This can include but not be limited to, continuing to explore a rainbow crosswalk, community events and celebrations, and an equity diversity and inclusion committee;

AND FURTHER that Council will receive mandatory EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) training;

AND FURTHER, that in this process, we connect with consultants and professionals in this field, and not put the onus and labour of educating council on marginalized communities.

2SLGBTQ+ Ad-hoc Working Group

On January 30, 2023, Council created the 2SLGBTQ+ Ad-hoc Working Group (the “Working Group”) with a mandate to provide advice to Council on steps the Township should take to be more inclusive and make recommendations on specific initiatives including a rainbow crosswalk.

The Working Group has made two time-sensitive requests to Council to date, both of which were approved by Council. First, on May 30, 2023, the Working Group requested that the Township host a pride flag raising ceremony to celebrate pride month in June. Second, on June 6, 2023, the Working Group requested that the Township start a rainbow window sticker campaign supported by an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) grant of \$300 to purchase inclusive pride window stickers. That request also included a suggestion that the Township put rainbow stickers in the window of Township facilities. The distribution of window stickers was delayed in order to find a supplier of stickers with the newer progressive intersex-inclusive design.

Comments:

The Working Group has met over the four meetings contemplated in their terms of reference and has organized their recommendations into key themes to Council in this report. Unless further direction is provided by Council, the Working Group's mandate has been fulfilled with the submission of this report.

The Working Group wishes to thank Council for engaging with them on the important issue of supporting and celebrating the 2SLGBTQ+ community and their friends, family and allies. While work towards an inclusive community will be ongoing, the Working Group hopes the recommendations in this report will make significant progress on this journey.

1. Include Inclusivity in the Township's Community Strategic Plan

First and foremost, Working Group members wish to recognize that while inclusive symbols are important, there needs to be an ongoing focus in thinking and practice at the Township to make sure all residents feel they are a valued part of the community.

At a high level, the Working Group recommends that the Township include inclusivity in the Township's next Community Strategic Plan and include specific actions related to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. The Township should have a goal of being an inclusive place and create a culture of inclusivity for staff, Council, volunteers and residents in all services it provides. While the mandate of the Working Group was focused on 2SLGBTQ+ issues, the Working Group recognized that inclusivity needs to relate to all residents and all marginalized communities. The Township should strategically plan to create an environment where every resident, regardless of their background, feels respected, valued, and supported.

2. Advance Inclusivity

The second grouping of recommendations speak to options for the Township to advance inclusive initiatives and practices that raise awareness, show support and empower the local 2SLGBTQ+ community. Specific initiatives to advance inclusivity are below.

2. a. Advance Inclusivity: Organize an annual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony

Working Group members recommend that the Township should organize an annual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony in June, building on the success of the first flag raising in 2023. The Working Group proposes installing additional flagpoles at other facilities specifically for this purpose. By making this an annual event and increasing the number of flagpoles, the Township aims to visibly demonstrate its support for the 2SLGBTQ+ community during Pride Month. The ceremony fosters inclusivity, celebrates diversity, and sends a positive message of acceptance to residents and visitors alike. In 2023 this initiative was organized by the Mayor's office and staff in Corporate Services in collaboration with partner community organizations and residents.

2. b. Advance Inclusivity: Join the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities

The UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities is an initiative that encourages municipalities to actively promote inclusivity and diversity within their communities. By joining this coalition, Woolwich Township would demonstrate a commitment to implementing policies and initiatives that eliminate all forms of discrimination, thereby creating a more a safe and welcoming environment for all residents, particularly those from marginalized and vulnerable groups.

The coalition provides a network of municipalities to share experiences and access resources aimed at fostering equality, social cohesion, and human rights protection at the local level. Through its efforts, the coalition seeks to make cities and towns more equitable and inclusive places to live, work, and visit.

The Working Group also reviewed membership or certification with the [Rainbow Registered Guide](#) or the [Pride Certified Program](#) but recommends the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities offers the most benefit to the Township with more of a municipal and less of a business focus. If approved by Council, the Township would join other municipalities who are members or are working on joining include Guelph, Stratford, Wilmot and 40 other municipalities in Ontario.

To become a member of the Coalition, the Township would need to undertake the following steps:

1. Obtain support from Township Council
2. Adopt a resolution to join the Coalition (included as a recommendation)
3. Sign the Declaration (see attachment 2)
4. Inform the Canadian Commission for UNESCO
5. Announce the Township's involvement to local partners and residents

After becoming a member additional work can be done to continue striving to be an inclusive municipality. Some of the Coalition's suggested initiatives are already included in activities throughout the Township's strategic plan. Others like promoting cultural sustainability, equity and diversity, immigrant attraction and retention and building relationships with Indigenous communities are increasingly becoming initiatives the Township is working towards. This initiative is a long-term commitment that will need regular engagement from staff.

2. c. Advance Inclusivity: Provide EDIB Grants

Council created the EDIB grant category in 2023 for activities, initiatives and events that support equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging in the Township. This grant has provided seed funding for the first Woolwich Pride and the first H.O.P.E. Multicultural Festival in the Township as well as other activities aimed at supporting inclusion. The organizers of both events plan to make these annual events and may apply for funding in

the future. By ensuring stable and secure funding for events like these, the Township will support grass-roots initiatives brought forward by residents that build community.

While this is a relatively new grant category, Working Group members recommend that if more initiatives come forward in the future, Council consider increasing this grant category. Council will need to determine the appropriate level of funding each year during budget deliberations.

2. d. Advance Inclusivity: Consider a shared EDIB Staff Role

Working Group members learned that the Township's Senior Management Team regularly considers ways to advance inclusivity, Human Resources staff provides EDIB training to staff, and all staff have some responsibility for delivering and providing programs and services in an inclusive way. Members recognized that while there is some work being done at the Township, no one person is responsible for advancing inclusivity and would like to see more work done in this area. Working Group members also recognized that a dedicated staff resource would be a significant long-term cost to the Township.

The Working Group recommends that Council consider a shared EDIB staff resource in the future as funding is available. Sharing a staff resource would have the benefit of sharing both costs as well as ideas, strategies and learning among partner municipalities. The Working Group also recognizes that Council will need to balance the advancing inclusivity with being fiscally responsible.

2. e. Advance Inclusivity: Provide EDIB Staff Training

Working Group members recommend that the Township provide EDIB training to staff and ensure staff have time to do the training. The Township relies on staff to provide services to the community and ensuring training staff are aware and understand the importance of EDIB will help ensure services are inclusive.

The Working Group recognizes that the Township has started providing EDIB training to staff and recommends this continue. In 2023, Township staff received diversity and inclusion training through the Township's online training platform and an in-person workshop on Uncovering Our Biases.

3. Explore EDIB programming and partnerships

Working Group members recommend the Township explore opportunities for programming related to EDIB either delivered by the Township or through partnerships. One example the Working Group started to explore is the concept of a "Human Library" or "Living Library" in partnership with the Region of Waterloo Library. Engaging with the community to request ideas for other programming ideas will be important for this recommendation.

A human library is when individuals offer to share their stories and experiences by speaking with people in a safe environment. Readers can engage with those who volunteer to be “books” in one-on-one or small-group conversations. Representatives from the Region of Waterloo Library have indicated they have not organized a human library to date but would be interested in partnering with the Township to explore the opportunity. The Ontario Library Association has a Human Library Toolkit to support these programs.

Human “books” offer some unique benefits over written books like the sharing of emotions during live storytelling or allowing for questions and discussion. A human library provides the opportunity to meet someone you may not have interacted with before and a safe space to ask a potentially uncomfortable question. Some human “books” that could be considered in this context include *Parent of a 2SLGBTQ+ Child*, *Person in a Same-sex Marriage*, *Two-spirited Indigenous Person* or *Person who uses They/Them Pronouns*. A program like this with appropriate human “books” would promote understanding and empathy of diverse lived experiences, dispel stereotypes and prejudices, celebrate diversity within our community and foster social inclusion.

4. Promote inclusive symbols

One of the core elements of the Working Group’s mandate was to explore inclusive symbols that could be displayed in the Township to raise awareness of community support for 2SLGBTQ+ people, friends, family and allies who live, work and visit the Township. This goal centers on visibly celebrating diversity and inclusivity throughout the Township through initiatives that promote inclusivity. The aim is to create a sense of belonging and pride for all community members and visitors, regardless of their background or identity.

Working Group members brainstormed ideas for inclusive symbols extensively. Once ideas were identified, the Working Group prioritized symbols, factoring in the cost of purchasing and maintaining symbols, the impact in communities who have had their inclusive symbols vandalized and a desire to incrementally increase 2SLGBTQ+ visibility at a pace that fits our unique community. The Working Group recommends that Council consider moving forward with the following inclusive symbols in the order listed below as time and budget allows.

4. a. Promote inclusive symbols: Pride Window Stickers

Provide stickers previously approved by Council are currently available for businesses for free at reception. Businesses can then display these stickers in their windows as a visible way to show their allyship and inclusivity towards the 2SLGBTQ+ people. By participating in the campaign, businesses contribute to creating more welcoming and accepting environments for all individuals, fostering a sense of community and support. Council also approved installing pride window stickers in Township facilities.

If the campaign is successful distributing the initial 150 stickers, additional stickers could be available for a nominal fee.

4. b. Promote inclusive symbols: Rainbow Benches

Following the pride window sticker campaign, the next symbol the Working Group considered were rainbow benches. The Working Group recommends these benches be purchased in the year following approval of this report and the number determined by Council based on budget availability. These benches could be either hand-painted by the community or premade. Rainbow benches would provide a splash of colour and symbol of inclusion in the community.

Rainbow benches are relatively inexpensive and simple to install and would give the community a sense of the ongoing maintenance requirements.

4. c. Promote inclusive symbols: Community Murals

In the second year of implementing inclusive symbols, the Working Group recommends developing lower-cost community murals. One example of such a mural could be developing a hand-painted mural in Gibson Park in conjunction with the Woolwich Pride event. Another example the Working Group considered was similar to the Elmira Art Exhibit organized by the Elmira Business Improvement Area (BIA). This initiative involved calling for the community to submit art and installing computer-printed murals around Downtown Elmira.

With the lower cost, multiple community murals could be installed in different areas of the Township with unique designs that matched the character of community and those that support the design.

4. d. Promote inclusive symbols: Professional Mural

Following successful installation of one or more community murals, the Working Group recommends considering a professional mural. The Working Group anticipates this could occur in the third year following this report. Professional Mural artists can engage with a community to develop a concept for a piece of community art that fits the character of the community. They develop a design, paint the piece and provide colour samples for future repairs or touch-ups. The result is both a custom piece of public art and a symbol of inclusion.

Because of the higher cost for a professional mural, Council would need to be more selective of the location, for example a meeting place or facility that services multiple settlements in the Township.

4. e. Promote inclusive symbols: Rainbow Crosswalks or Sidewalks

The Working Group was specifically tasked with considering a Rainbow Crosswalk as recommended by the Canadian Mental Health Association (the "CMHA"). This specific inclusive symbol generated significant discussion around things to consider like cost,

maintenance, vandalism and the experience of other communities. The Working Group agreed with the importance of this symbol of support for 2SLGBTQ+ people as identified by the CMHA. A rainbow crosswalk or a rainbow sidewalk is the last inclusive symbol the Working Group recommends installing, anticipated timing is the fifth year following submission of this report.

The Working Group recommends further consideration on several factors is needed, including:

- Location: Elmira is a good location, but other locations should also be considered; a community centre like the Woolwich Memorial Centre may be a good location;
- Cost: because of the lower cost, two rainbow sidewalks could be installed in different areas of the Township for less than the cost of a single rainbow crosswalk on a road
- Maintenance: a crosswalk across a road adds the element of maintaining possible tire marks; both a crosswalk and a sidewalk should use high-quality (thermoplastic) paint to support ongoing maintenance and stand up to winter maintenance activities
- Design: recent flags are using the new progress pride design to recognize people who are racialized, trans and intersex

5. Continuing community engagement and feedback

To complete the initiatives listed above, there will need to be continuing engagement and feedback from the community. Different initiatives identified in this report will require different inputs from the community; for example, developing EDIB programming and partnerships might require residents to submit ideas or requests for desired programs whereas there are still many questions the Working Group would like Council to engage with the community around the location(s) and type of rainbow crosswalk or sidewalk when it is time to consider installing one.

The Township should continue on the path to create a more inclusive and responsive community by establishing effective communication channels that actively engage residents and facilitate their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Depending on the need, community feedback could take several forms including existing methods like the Woolwich page on the EngageWR platform.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

As identified in this report, while every department needs to be engaged in EDIB initiatives, there is no one staff person or department responsible for EDIB. Since the Director of Corporate Services/Clerk supported the Working Group, this position can continue to support implementation of this report as time permits.

Financial Impacts:

Financial implications of the recommendations in this report are estimated in the table below. Approving the recommendation in this report does not commit Council to any specific funding; Council will need to approve funding for specific projects or initiatives during annual budget deliberations.

Recommendation	Cost	Timing	Comments
1. Include EDIB in the Township's Strategic Plan	\$0	Year 1	There is no cost to include EDIB, however some initiatives or activities may have costs
2. a. Organize an annual pride flag raising ceremony	Minimal	Ongoing	Minimal costs may be required to refresh flags when they become worn. Purchasing flag poles at additional buildings can be considered in future capital budgets
2. b. Join the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities	\$0	Year 1	There is no cost to join, however there may be costs for some initiatives or activities
2. c. Provide EDIB Grants	\$6,000	Ongoing	Council will decide on this amount each year during budget deliberations
2. d. Consider a shared EDIB staff role	Unknown	TBD	Cost could be shared by exploring partnerships
2. e. EDIB staff training	Minimal	Ongoing	Human Resources has already started offering EDI training for staff
3. Explore EDIB programming and partnerships	Unknown	Ongoing	The Township could deliver programming directly or through partnerships. Costs depend on the program; for example, the human library would have minimal costs
4. a. Pride Window Stickers	\$0	Ongoing	Once the initial supply of 150 stickers purchased with an EDIB grant have been distributed, additional stickers can be made available at a minimal cost
4. b. Benches	\$1,000 - \$2,000	Year 1	Depending on design, per professional painted bench

Recommendation	Cost	Timing	Comments
4. c. Community Murals	\$1,500 - \$2,000	Year 2	Computer printed murals from community artists
4. d. Professional Mural	\$10,000 - \$20,000	Year 3	Outdoor painted mural by a professional mural artist, depending on the wall surface and location
4. e. Rainbow Crosswalk or Sidewalk(s)	\$10,000 - \$25,000	Year 5	A rainbow crosswalk (\$25,000) or sidewalk (\$10,000) using quality paint. Consider more than one sidewalk could be installed for the cost of one crosswalk and higher maintenance costs are expected on a road
5. Community engagement and feedback	Minimal	Ongoing	Explore using existing methods like engageWR platform and others as needed

The Working Group recognizes the financial pressures the Township is under and acknowledges that implementing the initiatives in this report can be achieved over several years and consistent with the level of funding that is made available by Council.

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Under the focus area of Healthy Communities is a goal to Provide for Inclusive and Accessible Communities. The recommendations in this report from the Working Group will support goals like coming up with solutions that focus on ‘the ties that bind the community fabric’ and finding ways to connect people.

Conclusion:

The submission of this report marks the completion of the 2SLGBTQ+ Ad-hoc Working Group’s mandate. As requested by Council, the Working Group has made several recommendations Township Council could take to be more inclusive, provided costing estimates and prioritized inclusive symbols that could be displayed in the Township. The Working Group recommends that Council approve the recommendations in this report to support and celebrate 2SLGBTQ+ people, friends, family and allies who live, work and play in the Township.

Attachments:

1. Letter from Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington Letter regarding a Progress Rainbow Crosswalk for Elmira
2. Declaration to Join the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities