

One City – One Journey – One Safe Crossing:

The City of Calgary Public Safety Anti-Racism Action Strategy

Executive Summary

One City – One Journey – One Safe Crossing: The City of Calgary Public Safety Anti-Racism Action Strategy was developed to mitigate and prevent systemic racism and racialization in the realm of public safety including municipal enforcement and the delivery of City programs and services. This Action Strategy was instrumental in the development of *Dismantling Systemic Racism, Transforming Lives: The City of Calgary Anti-Racism Strategic Plan 2023-2027*.

As The City, we have embarked on a journey to become anti-racist and fulfill Council’s Strategic Direction 2023-2026 to create “A City where people of all backgrounds belong and live our commitment to truth and reconciliation. A city reflective of public dignity in all public spaces. A city that denounces hate; promotes transformative community engagement and actively works to address systemic racism in all forms”. On this journey, we recognize our responsibility as a signatory of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racial Discrimination ([CCMARD](#)) which outlines our role as a guardian of public safety and tasks us to:

- Increase vigilance against systemic and individual racism and discrimination.
- Monitor racism and discrimination in the community more broadly as well as municipal actions taken to address racism and discrimination.
- Inform and support individuals who experience racism and discrimination.
- Support policing services in their efforts to be exemplary institutions in combating racism and discrimination.

Systemic changes that impact public safety, order, dignity, and peace for the community and employees have been undertaken as part of the City of Calgary Anti-Racism Program with the following objectives:

1. Reduce hate activities in all spheres of public life in Calgary.
2. Ensure consistency in municipal standards, procedures, policies, and bylaws related to accessing public spaces in alignment with the Alberta Human Rights Act.
3. Increase safety for Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized Calgarians to exercise fundamental rights and freedoms in public spaces, properties, and wider Calgary communities as enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act.
4. Strengthen practices to respect human dignity, respect, honesty, compassion, courage, fairness, accountability, and integrity in interactions with policing and municipal programs and service providers.
5. Increase awareness of impacts of racial profiling, excessive use of force, and other racializing behaviours in municipal policing, bylaw enforcement, and other City service providers on Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized, and all City employees and Calgarians.
6. Advance action-oriented collaboration with Calgary Police Service, Calgary Fire Department, Corporate Security, Emergency Management & Community Safety by collecting and disseminating disaggregated race-based data.
7. Ensure that members of City staff, volunteers, and Calgarians can work and access services in hate-free environments by reviewing and amending existing policies and bylaws.
8. Address under-reporting, investigation, and mediation of hate activities by streamlining the combined efforts of public safety providers.

Addressing Racial Injustice in Public Safety

Public safety refers to the protection of life and property through the prevention of crime, avoidance or mitigation of disasters, and provision of care in life threatening situations. Public safety providers include policing institutions, criminal justice agencies, fire departments, security agencies, and emergency management agencies. Public safety service design and delivery revolves primarily around crisis intervention, risk management, harm reduction, and de-escalation. Monitoring and evaluating the efficiency of public safety service delivery evolved to centre on unquestionable obedience for enforcers and emergency responders, and non-negotiable compliance for members of the public. Measurable indicators to regulate officer/responder conduct and public members' compliance became cornerstones of determining public peace and order. These measurements influenced the design and implementation of public safety policies, procedures, and practices that in turn required lawmakers to create and pass legislation that ensures the functionality of the system at a federal, provincial, and community level.

Addressing racial injustice as a manifestation of systemic racism within the realm of public safety, was a key message highlighted in the [Commitment To Anti-Racism What We Heard Report](#) submitted to Council in October 2020, as illustrated in these excerpts:

- “Systems were created with racism and oppression/suppression as the intent and have only evolved in some practices but still have the same function and thus continue that same action.
- Systemic racism is the unequal access to resources and unequal treatment of people. It is the people you know, the experiences you do/don't have access to, the resources you can/can't get. This system of privilege gives some more while taking away from others or denying them access in the first place. This is because policies and practices are driven by our values, both those we actively chose and those we “accept” because it is the status quo.
- We reinforce and perpetuate these systems, and their original intents, by denying change to the status quo. We heard about specific examples: Indian Act, foster care system, the RCMP and police.

- For the police and justice system in general, speakers and the panel talked about the original intent of policing (to control the actions of specific groups: Métis, Indigenous, Chinese, and Japanese) and that this original design/intent is still happening today.
- To address systemic racism means that we must address the current status quo”.

Within the broader context of dismantling systemic racism and transforming lives, racial justice refers to addressing “structural and systemic racism from programs, services, policies, and systems to ensure everyone is treated equitably including Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized Peoples” (*Dismantling Systemic Racism, Transforming Lives: City of Calgary Anti-Racism Strategic Plan Report 2023-2027*). In the context of public safety service design and delivery, racial justice means the systemic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable protections, opportunities, and outcomes for all. Racial justice in public safety design aims to do three things:

Reckon: provide a wholesome account of what is wrong about the systems and the ways people act within these systems;

Repair: review and amend the systems and individual behaviours in collaboration with those impacted and those in positions of influence; and

Re-imagine: collaboratively re-design systems that ensure fair and equitable protections, opportunities, and outcomes for all regardless of race.

In the development of systemic changes that enhance racially just public safety, the 3Rs (Reckon, Repair, Re-imagine) were used to brainstorm ways of connecting system-centered and human-centered public safety. Systems-centered public safety revolves around predicting and controlling public behaviour to protect life and property can be traced back to the regulating and governing of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized Peoples. These regulations formally laid out the legal foundations of a system of entrenching into law and into the psyche of perpetrators and victims the regulation of hate, bigotry, and prejudice into a form of systemic inequitable and unfair protection, treatment, and outcomes based on race.

Human-centered public safety looks at the policies, bylaws, and legislation that regulate behaviours, publications, or decisions that cause or sustain racism and racialization and how it aligns or mis-aligns with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Alberta Human Rights Act*. It also explores the risks that exist to the life, security, liberty, and dignity of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized peoples and communities if regulatory systems are not re-designed.

The main concern regarding the current public safety system (systems-centered public safety) is that it has significant gaps in balancing the need to ensure equal treatment of all Calgarians regardless of race while maintaining order and keeping the peace. This has been the case for over hundreds of years.

Such inequities exist mostly in regulations, prevention tactics, and follow-up supports that influence behaviour patterns that, in turn, may result in loss of human dignity for some Calgarians. These gaps in equal treatment have impacted Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized Calgarians in higher numbers and have to be amended to provide equal protection for all Calgarians as enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. This means finding safe, innovative, effective, and sustainable ways to center the protection of life and property without compromising human dignity. This is what human-centered public safety seeks to achieve namely, safety, protection, and dignity for all.

To this end, the 3Rs lay the foundation for racially just public safety for all Calgarians regardless of race. Laying this foundation requires “empathetic listening, building on a series of engagements, collaborations and centering the lived and living experiences of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized Calgarians including City employees to co-create possible solutions required for anti-racism systemic change” (*Disrupting Systemic Racism, Transforming Lives*; City of Calgary Ant-Racism Strategic Plan 2023-2027).

Pathways to Putting Anti-Racism Public Safety Work into Action

Five pathways to developing a racial-just Public Safety Action Strategy were launched to align with the five focus areas in the *Dismantling Systemic Racism, Transforming Lives*: City of Calgary Anti-Racism Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

These distinct and yet interwoven pathways or initiatives were created to align with the Anti-Racism Program mission, to educate, collaborate, engage, and make policy changes. These five pathways can be summarized as follows: Engagements with Calgarians through external consultants (ActionDignity and Habitus Collective) contracted to gather information on the type, nature, and impacts of hate activities on Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized Calgarians in public spaces and their interactions with public safety providers. Emerging themes from these engagements revolve mainly around:

- Lived and living experiences of hate and racial harassment in public spaces and City properties,
 - Racially inequitable processes and procedures in reporting hate crimes and incidents,
 - Systemic barriers to accessing racially equitable and responsive protection/treatment,
 - Inadequate services that provide racial trauma informed care and supports, and
 - Inadequate facilities and supports to promote social cohesion and hate-free environments across communities.
1. Reciprocal mentorship has led to two-way Anti-Racism work. Building on this model, the Anti-Racism Program has initiated conversation to create similar initiatives with other public safety providers such as Calgary Police Services, Calgary Fire Department and Corporate Security.
 2. Scoping exercises with public safety providers including Calgary Police Service, Emergency Management & Community Safety, Corporate Security, and diverse City service providers. These engagements were used to identify terms and conditions that create and/or sustain systemic racial inequities in the design and delivery of the duty to apprehend, duty to protect, and duty to care

3. Internal engagement and collaboration with City departments including Community Services, Law Legislative & Security, People Innovation & Collaboration Services, Operational Services as well as City partners such as Calgary Police Service. The engagement involved collaborative strategic planning to identify lived and living experiential impacts of systemic racism and racialization during encounters between public safety City staff and Calgarians, and ways to collaboratively mitigate harm and strengthen public trust. A Racial Justice Analysis Tool has been developed by the Anti-Racism Program to review programs, services, policies, and systems to help promote racial equity and justice.
4. Anti-hate training for public safety providers from diverse City programs and services such as Emergency Management & Community Safety and Corporate Security. Anti-hate training focuses on increasing awareness of the role that hate, prejudice and bigotry played in the evolution of systemic inequitable and unfair protection and treatment of Canadians based on race. The training also highlights the importance of lived and living experiential accounts with hate in public spaces and City properties, and ways that City staff can respond to hate incidents as victims, witnesses, or allies.

The five pathways to creating racially-just public safety in Calgary have influenced the development of 15 strategic actions to catalyze systemic changes that impact public safety, dignity, order and peace for community and employees (*Dismantling Systemic Racism, Transforming Lives: The City of Calgary Anti-Racism Strategic Plan 2023-2027*).

Systemic changes to Enhance Public Safety, Dignity, Order, and Peace

The City of Calgary Anti-Racism Strategic Plan provides an overview of the strategic actions to pave the way for systemic changes that create equitable and fair protection, treatment, and outcomes for all Calgarians by enhancing public safety, dignity, order, and peace. The Public Safety Anti-Racism Action Strategy shows the need to examine policies, bylaws, and legislation that regulate behaviours, statements, or decisions that cause or sustain racism and racialization and their link to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act. This also entails prioritizing prevention, protection against profiling, accountability, standards for codes of behaviour, and education to create anti-racist environments.

Towards One City, One Journey, One Safe Crossing

Systemic racism in municipal law enforcement and public safety service delivery in Calgary and across North America goes back hundreds of years with debilitating impacts on Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized Peoples. This type of systemic racism puts lives and the well-being of Calgarians at risk. Unfortunately, some Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized Calgarians encounter racial injustice in the course of their daily lives - when they peacefully and legally use transit and taxi/vehicle-for-hire services, access recreational facilities, walk on public streets/trails, question their arrest and detention, rent housing, visit places of worship, exercise charter rights to take affirmative actions, or request health supports. To fulfil the vision of Calgary as a great place to make a living and a great place to make a life regardless of race or ethnic background, we developed the Public Safety Anti-Racism Action Strategy to realize the vision of a racially just city that promotes public peace, public order, and public dignity for all Calgarians.