

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEDIA RELEASE: Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association Says Niagara Region Missed Opportunity for Real Police Reforms at Special Meeting**

THOROLD, ON – the Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association (NRARA) criticized the Niagara Region Council for missing the opportunity at its special meeting on Thursday, July 23, 2020 to pass meaningful and specific reforms of the Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS).

Saleh Waziruddin, who spoke as a delegate at the special meeting representing NRARA, said “Regional Council had an opportunity to pass actual reforms which have been long called for such as ending street checks, which was done by Vancouver just the previous night and which even the NRPS's presentation has shown had dwindled down to zero stops. This was easy to do. Instead Regional Council only “continued the conversation” which is just a public relations exercise for the NRPS if it does not result in any action in the near future.”

“The motion in front of Regional Council was at best asking the NRPS to do what it already does, or even worse was asking for less than that. This is not real reform but a public relations opportunity for the NRPS to say what it is already doing, not what steps it will take for reform or to even acknowledge the need for reforms. It is a stark contrast to the list of 10 reforms the St Catharines Anti-Racism Advisory Committee has proposed and which the Regional councillors would be aware of through media coverage and a background letter we sent them,” Saleh explained.

Saleh Waziruddin also noted that while NRPS Chief MacCulloch went so far as to acknowledge that systemic racism existed “in the institution of policing” he stopped short of acknowledging it exists in the NRPS specifically, as was also denied earlier by Deputy Chief Bill Fordy in an open letter which was denounced publicly by NRARA member Erika Smith. Saleh Waziruddin denounced this “stubborn refusal to admit to something very basic” as part of the “NRPS's public relations messaging of denying the NRPS has any connection to the need for police reforms elsewhere.”

“Programs described by the chief for diversity tours and community relations are nice but are ultimately about public relations. Diversity and community relations are not the same as anti-racism training lead by experts from equity seeking groups,” criticized Saleh Waziruddin.

The Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association was founded in the summer of 2018 by three Black and brown women who experienced anti-Black racism in a previous local anti-racism organization. NRARA's current campaigns include police reforms in the NRPS, employment equity, school reforms in the District School Board of Niagara, and organizing manufacturer donations for personal care products for Black women in shelters.