



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 17, 2020

Media Contact:

Saleh Waziruddin

Cell: 289 990 7683

thenrara@gmail.com

MEDIA RELEASE: Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association Criticizes Niagara Regional Council for Self-Congratulation for Listening While Ignoring BIPOC and Other Delegations

THOROLD, ON – The Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association (NRARA) on Monday, August 17, 2020 criticized the Niagara Regional Council for self-congratulation for listening, and congratulating the Niagara Regional Police for a low level of complaints, at its Special Council meeting on August 13, while ignoring the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) and other delegations about why many are reluctant to file complaints, and that there is a racism problem in the police.

Welland Inuit resident Herman Omilgoituk, who testified about how he was brutalized and racially insulted by police, noted that chief Bryan MacCulloch came very close to admitting there was racism in the Niagara Regional Police, “He tippy toed around it. But it's true. Everyone knows at least one person who says racist things. However as police it should never happen.”

Saleh Waziruddin of NRARA asked “After listening to first hand testimony from an Indigenous resident who told them he was reluctant to complain because it's so difficult to prove against what an officer is saying, many councillors chose to ignore what they heard in favor of a white police chief telling them there were hardly any complaints, congratulating him and telling him we should all be thankful! How can Lincoln Mayor Sandra Easton go on the radio the next day as seconder of the Regional motion and say the outcome is hope that everyone is listening when council clearly ignored what the delegations of residents were telling them.”

Saleh Waziruddin said “Some councillors exceeded police officials' past denials that systemic racism exists in the police force by denying that there is even such a thing as systemic racism, because it can't be quantified, or that they don't even want to hear about racism, saying “it always bothers me when I hear about race relations.” This is an aggressive denial of what Regional Council heard from the direct experiences of racialized delegates and an obstacle to any progress.”

Even Councillor Tom Insinna, who voted for the Regional resolution, noted it largely proposes what is “already being done. I don't think it would be hard for the police to come up with this and report back and say, “Yeah it's already being done, these things are already being accomplished.””

Saleh Waziruddin of NRARA explained “Asking the police to do what they are already doing, and to report what they are already reporting, can only be an exercise in self-serving public relations and not any kind of progress taking us beyond where we are today.”

Saleh Waziruddin added “It was disappointing that the 7 reforms St Catharines approved from its Anti-Racism Committee were incorporated only by way of correspondence, turning the Regional

Council into a messenger instead of an agent for change, although given how the discussion ignored the testimony from BIPOC delegates that systemic racism exists in the police, perhaps most of those reforms would not have any support.”

Two amendments were introduced to the Regional resolution which were two of the three reforms rejected by St. Catharines City Council by very close votes. The body camera amendment was narrowly defeated but the moratorium on street checks, or the collection of identifying information, was overwhelmingly rejected by Regional Council.

Saleh Waziruddin explained “I think councillors rejected a moratorium on street checks because they chose to accept the police chief’s inane explanation that this would require repealing provincial legislation. Anyone can quit smoking without overturning tobacco regulations, quitting drinking doesn’t require repealing alcohol regulations, so why does stopping street checks require repealing the laws that regulate them? Chief MacCulloch was forced to admit as much after a sustained four rounds of questions from Councillor Laura Ip that the law only regulates street checks and does not require them.”

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, and school reforms in the District School Board of Niagara.