

York Region non-profits target diversity with Provincial grants



By Brock Weir

Non-profits often develop in order to fill a need within any given community, but a new grant from the Province will help York Region non-profits fill any gaps in delivering their services in an inclusive, equitable way.

Laura Albanese, Ontario's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, toured Aurora's Blue Hills Child and Family Centre on Thursday morning to announce a \$4.1 million investment in 21 non-profits across York Region, of which Blue Hills will receive \$145,755 for new programs to develop programs for "inclusive leadership."

Working in partnership with the Community Inclusivity and Equity Council of York Region, the program will develop and implement guides, tools, and learning sessions to help not-for-profits apply diversity, equity and inclusion practices across the board.

The news was welcomed by Michael Bowe, Supervisor of Diversity and Outreach for the Children's Aid Society of York Region, on behalf of the Community Inclusivity Council of York Region.

"As we, our communities, and our governments turn a focus to celebrating our nation's birthday, the current initiative provides a significant pathway forward with regards to enhancing how leadership within the service sector across the Province engages the equity-seeking community. It also highlights why our country is a beacon of hope for those across the planet, as well as an ideal, or at least a model, of citizenship across the globe.

"Through this grant, the Community Inclusivity Council endeavours to enhance the leadership capacity of all social service sectors by creating an equity lens leadership framework. That framework would be used by senior leaders to facilitate how they allocate funds, how they look at service delivery, and how to look at governance within their organization. They hope that in doing that, the children, youth and families that they serve will experience more equitable outcomes."

Grant in place, 25 provincial facilitators will be developed to deliver learn sessions across Ontario through various social service sectors. The end goal is they will be able to enhance access and provision of their services, and allow service leaders to "work in unison" and across sectors.

"The hope is that work will eliminate disproportionate and over-representation of people from equity-seeking groups from across our system and eventually address some historical wrongs that have occurred, and the unconscious bias that is embodied in our systems," said Mr. Bowe.

Announcing the grant alongside MPP Chris Ballard, Ms. Albanese hailed the Blue Hills team for delivering services to children and youth, as well as their families, facing complex mental health needs.

The total infusion of \$4.1 million over two years, split into 21 grants will help the non-profit sector "promote diversity within leadership teams, learn new ways to attract, retain, train and manage volunteers, and improve their ability to measure their success. "The projects that are being funded will actually reach 2,800 different organizations in the non-profit sector," said the Minister. "They will be providing over 400 training sessions, tools, manuals and resources across the Province. These projects [are intended] to pave the way to ensure that everyone who wants to has the opportunity to give back to their community. The goal is to make

Ontario a caring, compassionate and loving society for all; to continue to strengthen our communities and to improve lives. I hope it will help not only the non-profit organizations as a whole, but individual people and make them stronger and make us stronger as a consequence.?

These sentiments were echoed by Mr. Bowe, who underscored the importance of reaching ?equitable outcomes? in every facet of Canadian life.

?Let's stand in unison against Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, sexism, racism, ableism and all forms of discrimination and, at times, hate,? he said. ?As we celebrate the Confederation of our nation, we take a moment to reflect on alternative narratives that are sometimes left out of that nation-building narrative; the first one being our First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples.

?As we set out for fireworks and celebrate the greatness that our nations represent, do remember to reflect on First Nations communities and their narratives, as well as other communities, the Chinese community and the development of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, reflect on Pier 21 and the various communities that came through that port and, unfortunately, some that were turned back. Do reflect on the Punjabi community and their contribution to the birth of this nation, and the wars they have been a part of, and the treatment they experienced afterwards and, of course, enslaved Africans and their contributions to the country given that it is Black

History Month.

?We really look forward to your partnership in making sure this particular grant will really serve the purpose the Minister and her Ministry intended.?