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December 5, 2019,

Dear City Council, and AF&A committee members,

Please accept my comments for your consideration when reviewing the materials for the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre re-launch. The current set of recommendations for the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre do not flow logically nor respectfully from the community consultations. I have been involved with the research and advocacy work for the centre, the establishment of the centre, consulting on its operations, as well as evaluation of the work of the centre since 2014. I am also a scholar of issues of race, racism, racialization and anti-racism. I believe the centre should be reopened as scheduled in February of 2020.

Unfortunately, the recommendations call for the City to take on full responsibility for the centre including its operations. The community consultation report indicates clearly that independent community lead decision making is what was desired.

In our meeting last night with City staff, staff indicated that this was their staff recommendations being brought to council today, in spite of the consultation report. They insisted to move forward with these recommendations even without agreement from the community leaders and members of the partnership that helped advocate for, establish, operate and evaluate the centre since 2014. Concerns were shared with City staff that community members have indicated that they would not use a City-run Anti-Racism Resource Centre, especially one that excludes the skill sets and expertise of those who helped to advocate for, establish, operate and evaluate and support the centre.

As suggested to City staff yesterday, the recommendations should be amended to include the establishment of a HARRC community advisory board- to shape the intake, counselling, and referral making of the centre, as well as its community outreach, and accountability functions during the establishment of an independent board of directors. This board would need to have decision making powers, authority and influence, with appropriate reporting to the City. This board should also invite those who have been involved in the advocacy for, establishment of, operating of and evaluating of the centre to respectfully acknowledge their labour and contributions to the centre and their knowledge, experience, value and expertise. This work needs to set the example that we value the knowledge and expertise as well as the lived experiences of racialized people and demonstrate this through its practices, processes and procedures.

The recommendations for the dissolution of the funding agreement do not acknowledge that oversight, decision making, including HCCI, McMaster University, the Committee Against Racism, as well as independent research capacity was also in this agreement. These aspects of independent evaluation, collaborative decision making and community accountability need to be preserved.

Sincerely,

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