



African Canadian Association of Waterloo Region and Area (ACAWRA)

March 28, 2022

RE: Persistent Issues of Racism at the Waterloo Catholic District School Board. African Canadian Association of Waterloo Region and Area Demands Review of Systems Within Both School Boards

In February, we became aware of the incident in the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) where the police (WRPS) were called to remove a 4-year-old child from his school. This situation is deeply disturbing to us as a community. The fact that the WRPS responded to the call, removed the child from his school, placed the child in the back seat of a police cruiser, and drove him away points to deeper problems that extend beyond the school board. This incident has demonstrated the need for alternative emergency response mechanisms when dealing with vulnerable individuals such as children.

We hope this situation will inspire our community to reflect on the issue of policing and when and where they should be deployed. We would also like to acknowledge that since this case was brought to light, we have been overwhelmed with reports from black parents with children in both the Catholic and Public School Boards. We have heard statements such as: "I am dealing with anxiety..."; "It is tough to console my child when he feels he's been treated unfairly"; "we are struggling to..." These statements are heart-wrenching, and they amplify a call to action; a call to protect the rights of our children and our community at large.

Furthermore, the fact that the community has become more open to sharing their stories about similar experiences with the school system is an indication that this incident is not an isolated one. Therefore, it is high time we hold the school system accountable to ensure that our children are safe and treated fairly.

Also, we find the WCDSB's response very insensitive given the severity of this heartbreaking incident. We were particularly shocked by Loretta Notten's response to this incident. As the Director of Education for the WCDSB, her statement that "[we] certainly realize that we have room to grow and we're committed to that growth, but I would take umbrage to the allegation that there is systemic racism in our board" is a slap in the face as it denies the existence of systemic racism in the WCDSB; it is also a clear indication of the Board's reluctance to address systemic racism in the school system. Therefore, we support the call for Loretta Notten to resign as her response showed a lack of regard, care, and empathy for the African and Black experience in the school system. We would also like to state that it is not enough for her to issue an apology after the fact. At this point, her apology will not suffice given that she had enough time and opportunities to engage with the community to resolve the matter between November of last year (2021) and February of this year (2022). As a community, we are deeply invested in the outcomes of this case and we are invested in the welfare of all our children while they are at school.

Finally, we commend the work of all stakeholder organizations within the Region and the province of Ontario who have shown support to the African, Caribbean, and Black communities during these difficult times. In addition, we state unequivocally that we remain committed to seeing that these institutions are held accountable. As such, we are committed to being a resource and an advocate for African and Black parents by creating a strategy beyond this one situation.

Sincerely,

ACAWRA

Community endorsements

- African Women's Alliance of Waterloo Region
- African Community Wellness Initiative
- Black Lives Matters Waterloo Region
- Bring on the Sunshine
- Caribbean Canadian Association of Waterloo Region
- Divonify
- Early Childhood Development Initiative
- Ethiopian Association in KW and Surrounding Areas
- Igbo Association
- Nigerians In the Region of Waterloo (NIROW)
- Peace For All Canada
- South Sudanese Association of KW and Area
- Zimbabwe Canada Association



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