

FIGHTING FOR FAIR HOUSING

A report from the Ontario Real Estate
Association's Presidential Advisory Group
on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion





SHEENA THOMPSON

1985 - 2022

This report is dedicated to the memory of Sheena Thompson and her contributions to improving equality and diversity in the real estate sector.

OREA's Presidential Advisory Group (PAG) on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will:

- Understand, address, and dismantle systemic racism in Ontario's Real Estate and Housing Sectors.
- Identify and challenge where sector systemic racism occurs and seek to change perceptions and attitudes through education, policy, and leadership development.
- Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in Ontario real estate for Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, LGBTQ2S+, women and people living with disabilities.

To accomplish these goals the PAG will:

- Consult with Brokerages, REALTORS®, government officials, regulators, consumers, sector-related organizations and Ontarians about racism and inequality in real estate and housing.
- Conduct qualitative and quantitative research to identify and challenge where sector systemic racism occurs and seek to change perceptions and attitudes through education, policy, and leadership development.
- Make recommendations to the OREA Board of Directors on actions that the Association can take to eliminate racism and embrace diversity and advance equality and inclusion in real estate and housing in Ontario.

End goal for PAG:

To report to the OREA Board of Directors with concrete recommendations within the scope of the mandate on how the Association can eliminate systemic racism and improve inclusion in Ontario real estate and housing sectors.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear OREA Members,

I've been proud to be chair of the Ontario Real Estate Association ("OREA") Presidential Advisory Group ("PAG") on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Our diverse group has taken pride in this unique opportunity to help more people in our Province find a place to call home and improve how REALTORS® treat each other, their clients, and the public.

OREA was one of the first organizations in the real estate community to create a task force focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This was no small task. It required a significant investment of funds, staff resources, and volunteer hours. This commitment shows your Association's dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Where other groups made statements, Ontario REALTORS® created a plan for action and change.

Many individuals don't understand why there is a need to focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our work showed why change is needed. We established that systemic racism is a problem in our sector and there is still so much work to be done to improve the relations between the real estate community and the public, especially when it comes to rental housing.

Moreover, there is much work to be done within the real estate community itself to ensure we are all treating each other with respect and dignity no matter our background. Our research was a learning experience for all of those involved.

Our Group had a bold goal - to generate recommendations to OREA's Board of Directors on how the Association can eliminate systemic racism and improve inclusion in Ontario's real estate and housing sectors. To accomplish our goal, we enlisted the services of world-renowned research firm Ipsos, conducted stakeholder interviews, studied public policy in other jurisdictions and worked with our fellow real estate boards.

On the following pages, you will find the PAG's recommendations that we hope will make a dent in the issues that we face. On behalf of the PAG, I think we can all feel proud to know that OREA has our backs and is here to advocate for the REALTOR® community.

Warmly,

Davelle Morrison
Chair

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past few years, the inequities in Ontario's real estate and housing sectors have been exacerbated and emphasized by the destabilizing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In tandem, an ongoing series of shocking and highly publicized acts of violence against racialized people, has shone a spotlight on a long history of racism and discrimination, where BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ individual experience higher barriers to housing attainment due to a system fraught with social injustice.

Deliberate and sustained actions are required to address these complex issues, and as a first step, the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) established the Presidential Advisory Group (PAG) on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The overarching goal of the PAG is to identify where systemic racism occurs in the real estate and housing sectors and seek to change policy, perceptions, and attitudes through education, advocacy, and research.

This document is the PAG's report to the OREA Board of Directors with recommendations on actions that the Association can take towards eliminating racism, embracing diversity, and advancing equality and inclusion.

To inform its recommendations the PAG oversaw the following research streams:

Market Research: Quantitative and qualitative surveys led by leading consumer research firm, Ipsos, to identify where systemic racism occurs, and to build an understanding of the journey and experiences of historically vulnerable populations as they navigate through the real estate and housing sectors in Ontario.

Jurisdictional Scan: A robust analysis of promising and established leading practices in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the real estate and housing sectors in Ontario, Canada, and abroad.

Stakeholder Engagement: Engagement with organizations that represent REALTORS® and consumers from BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities to collect insights into how they are affected by systemic discrimination and racism in Ontario's real estate and housing sectors.

Through this work, the PAG identified three areas for action, each representing key audiences and structures that OREA can influence to achieve its equity, diversity and inclusion objectives.

→ **Public Policy:** Influencing public policies and decision-makers to address systemic racism and discrimination.

→ **Real Estate Industry:** Engaging key organizations in the real estate sector, REALTORS®, and consumers to facilitate a racism and discrimination free real estate industry.

→ **OREA Governance & Operations:** Imbuing equity, diversity and inclusion into how OREA governs and operates and model the change that we want to see.

The overarching goal of the PAG is to identify where systemic racism occurs in the real estate and housing sectors...



PUBLIC POLICY

Key Findings

Housing affordability is a growing problem across Canada and disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities. According to 2018 Statistics Canada data, in Ontario, 72% of those who are not a visible minority own their homes, as compared to 43% of Black respondents, 50% of Indigenous respondents, and 67% of other visible minorities who own homes. Similarly, 71% of heterosexual persons are homeowners, whereas only 47% of those who identify as homosexual or bisexual are homeowners.

When there is an instance of discrimination during the home buying or renting journey, people don't always know how to report, and the enforcement mechanism isn't strong. Both REALTORS® and consumers say that they have been hesitant to report incidences of discrimination in the past because they do not believe action would be taken, feel that it's a long and tedious process, or are not sure of where to go for help, among other reasons.

A majority of both consumers and REALTORS® outright disagree that the process is free from discrimination. 93% of Black REALTORS® and 60% of all consumers surveyed disagree that renting is free from discrimination. 43% of REALTORS® say they've seen a rental deal fall through as a result of discrimination.

Objectives and Recommendations

Objective 1: Help members of disadvantaged communities become homeowners.

- End exclusionary zoning in Ontario cities.
- Reduce government-imposed costs on new rental projects, including duplexes, triplexes, and walk-ups.
- Build 99,000 community housing units over the next 10 years to clear the backlog and accommodate future growth.
- Mandate transit-oriented, mixed-income, and high-density avenue development in urban and suburban areas.
- Promote and help scale innovative approaches to affordable housing development.

Objective 2: Incorporate Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion into existing public policy.

- Mandate the equal treatment of all individuals under the Condominium Act to be inclusive of diverse families (e.g., same sex couples/parents).

Objective 3: Help disadvantaged communities access affordable home financing and rental support.

- Encourage expansion of affordable homeownership programs for disadvantaged communities and have proceeds be re-invested into new social housing stock, grants, rebates, low interest loans, rent subsidies, etc.
- Engage major financial institutions (and/or associations) in addressing inequities for BIPOC community.
- Advocate for a review of Ontario Residential Tenancies Act (2006), with the goal of improving access to affordable homes for disadvantaged communities.



REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Key Findings

Racism and discrimination exist in the housing and real estate sectors, and there is currently a lack of awareness amongst REALTORS® on this issue and how to address it. Over one third of REALTORS® have experienced discrimination or racism, and one in four BIPOC REALTORS® say that a client has refused to work with them because of their identity. Two in ten consumers say they've been treated unfairly, and BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ individuals are more likely to say this has happened to them.

There are no easy, efficient, and “safe” reporting mechanisms for consumers to report incidents and access legal or education resources to address the incident. There is a clear gap in the consumer experience when it comes to feedback mechanisms and support when racism or discrimination occurs. 80% of consumers don't know where to go to report, and 75% expect their REALTOR® to be involved in guiding and supporting.

Visible minorities often face financial inequities and barriers. BIPOC individuals engaged in Ipsos' qualitative engagement discussed the fact that financial inequities are often faced by visible minorities. 16% of consumers surveyed indicated facing roadblocks during the mortgage process due to their race, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation. 45% of REALTORS® and 59% of consumers support providing more financial assistance to disadvantaged communities in the renting/leasing or buying/selling of homes.

Objectives and Recommendations

Objective 4: Enhanced DEI education opportunities and resources for REALTORS® and other professionals within the industry.

- Support the inclusion of mandatory DEI education in Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO) registration and continuing education.

Objective 5: A process for registering and investigating complaints that is easy to access and navigate, and results in stronger penalties for racist or discriminatory behaviour.

- Collaborate with RECO, CREA, and local Boards to establish a process and define reporting and investigation roles and responsibilities.
- Encourage local uptake and enforcement of the updated REALTOR® Code of Ethics.

Objective 6: Encourage more diverse Ontarians to join the real estate profession and serve in positions of leadership.

- Support DEI recruitment and hiring practices at the local Board, brand, brokerage, and individual level.



OREA GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Key Findings

There is a lack of representation and diversity in the structures that support organized real estate.

Interviews with individuals from organizations that represent OREA's BIPOC stakeholders identified improved representation in OREA's leadership and annual training as important action areas. 42% of REALTORS® support the organization increasing the diversity of its volunteer leaders on the Board of Directors and Committees, and 63% of consumers support ensuring that OREA's senior management and Board are diverse.

There is a desire for enhanced training practices on diversity, equity, and inclusion for OREA

volunteers and REALTORS®. When asked about OREA-led initiatives to address racism/discrimination, about half of REALTORS® identified diversity and inclusion training as having potential for high impact. 63% of consumers believe mandatory training on diversity and inclusiveness would be a useful program; this is higher among BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ respondents by more than 10 percentage points.

Despite the survey results, there are still a number of REALTORS® who don't recognize that there is a

problem. In the absence of overt displays of discrimination, REALTORS® find it challenging to recognize prejudice and report that systemic discrimination is more anecdotal than from direct experience. There is a discrepancy between the perceived role of the REALTOR® and the role their clients expect them to take in the face of discrimination. While consumers generally expect their REALTOR® to intervene when they witness discrimination, it was found that REALTORS® are unlikely to do so because acts are deemed subtle and inconsequential to the objective at hand (i.e., the closing of a deal).

Objectives and Recommendations

Objective 7: Increased awareness amongst membership and consumers.

- Develop a communications strategy to promote awareness, new research, and resources surrounding the issues.
- Leverage the Centre for Leadership Development to design and deploy DEI content for local boards, brands, brokerages and associations.

Objective 8: Increased equity diversity, and inclusion in OREA's staff and leadership.

- Review OREA governance structures, as well as Board selection processes and policies.
- Leverage OREA's existing internship and

mentorship programs to facilitate greater recruitment of disadvantaged youth.

Objective 9: Sustained DEI efforts and progress at OREA.

- Create a resource to lead this portfolio of work across the organization.
- Strengthen DEI across OREA HR policies, practices, and procedures as well as procurement and investment practices.



There is a lack of representation and diversity in the structures that support organized real estate.



INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years, a racial reckoning has taken place, triggered by a number of shocking acts of violence against racialized people. There is a long history of racism and discrimination in Canada’s housing sector, where Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, and those identifying as LGBTQ2S+ have been segregated into areas that are deemed “less desirable.” Deliberate isolation away from schools, transit, and other community supports that enable neighbourhoods to thrive has led to uneven growth in communities across our province. Even today, the journey to homeownership is fraught with social injustice challenges for many. Deliberate and sustained actions are required to dismantle systemic racism in Ontario’s real estate and housing sector.

In response to a growing movement for change by Canadians, OREA established the Presidential Advisory Group (PAG) on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). The PAG is a taskforce made up of nine members of the Ontario REALTOR® community, all representing diverse lived experiences. The PAG is supported by Special Advisor Michael Coteau (MP, Don Valley East).

The goal of the PAG is to identify where systemic racism occurs in the real estate and housing sectors and seek to change policy, perceptions, and attitudes through education, advocacy, and research.





Our Research-based Approach

To inform its recommendations the PAG oversaw the following research streams:

Market Research: Quantitative and qualitative surveys led by Canada's leading consumer research firm Ipsos to identify where sector systemic racism occurs, and to build an understanding of the journey and experiences of Ontario's historically vulnerable populations as they navigate the real estate sector. Nearly 1500 consumers, including a large sample of BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ consumers, and nearly 2000 REALTORS® were surveyed.

Jurisdictional Scan: A robust scan and analysis of promising and established leading practices in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the housing and real estate sectors in Canada and abroad. The scan documents practices from government entities, property developers and managers, real estate brokerages, and real estate associations, and provided key considerations for OREA based on the Ontario-specific context.

Stakeholder Organizations Engagement: Engagement with organizations that represent REALTORS® and consumers from BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities to collect insights into how systemic racism and bias is impacting both REALTORS® and consumers from these communities in the Ontario real estate and housing sector.

Leveraging the research, the PAG participated in facilitated workshops to ideate, prioritize, refine, and finalize recommendations for the OREA Board of Directors. OREA staff and leadership supported the process and provided the operational context necessary to ensure recommendations were actionable and aligned with OREA's strategies and advocacy priorities.

Our Mandate

OREA's Presidential Advisory Group on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will:

- Understand, address, and dismantle systemic racism in Ontario's Real Estate and Housing Sectors;
- Identify and challenge where sector systemic racism occurs and seek to change perceptions and attitudes through education, policy, and leadership development; and
- Advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in Ontario real estate for Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, LGBTQ2S+, women, and people living with disabilities.

This document is the PAG's final report to the OREA Board of Directors with concrete recommendations on actions that the Association can take to eliminate racism and embrace diversity and advance equality and inclusion in real estate and housing in Ontario.



Overview of Recommendations

The recommendations are intended to deliver on the PAG's mandate and respond to the extensive research conducted within Ontario's Real Estate and Housing sectors. Overall, the PAG identified three areas for action, each representing key audiences and structures that OREA can influence to achieve its equity, diversity, and inclusion objectives.

- **Public Policy:** Influencing public policies and decision-makers to address systemic racism and discrimination.
- **Real Estate Industry:** Engaging key organizations in the real estate sector, REALTORS®, and consumers to facilitate a racism and discrimination free real estate industry.
- **OREA Governance & Operations:** Imbuing equity, diversity, and inclusion into how OREA governs and operates and model the change that we want to see.

19 recommendations were prioritized to address these three areas for action. On the following pages, each recommendation is further outlined with context, research findings, and operational considerations. Implementation of these is a multi-step process. Once approved in principle by OREA Board of Directors, the recommendations will require OREA to build out more detailed operational plans and attach resourcing as part of regular organizational work planning processes. OREA should ensure that operationalization of these recommendations is an inclusive process that engages diverse stakeholders. For example, if recommendations are delegated to an OREA committee, the committee should include members with lived experience.

The PAG recognizes that much more work is required to address the feedback heard from REALTORS®, consumers, and stakeholders. These 19 recommendations were prioritized based on their potential for high-impact, feasibility, and ability to set the foundation for further reforms. Progress on some is already underway as they are aligned with OREA's current advocacy efforts. Other recommendations discussed, such as preventing discrimination of consumers based on their names and visuals, are complex issues and require further research and exploration by OREA. These will be considered for OREA's research agenda.

While the focus of this work is to impact all communities across Ontario, the PAG acknowledges that some public policy recommendations have an urban focus as this is where visible minorities are concentrated and tend to experience disproportionately greater impacts of racism and discrimination. For example, while Indigenous Peoples make up a small portion of the general population in urban areas in Canada, they account for a large percentage of those experiencing homelessness. In Toronto, for example, only 0.5% of the general population is Indigenous, and yet they make up about 15% of those who are experiencing homelessness.

In addition to implementing these recommendations, OREA should also leverage its influence on various platforms and in all government relations activities to promote the importance of DEI in real estate.

19 recommendations were prioritized based on their potential for high-impact, feasibility, and ability to set the foundation for further reforms.

OBJECTIVE 1: HELP MEMBERS OF DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES BECOME HOMEOWNERS.

Our research shows that housing affordability is a huge challenge for disadvantaged communities and home ownership rates are lower among BIPOC communities in Ontario.

To help disadvantaged communities build wealth and achieve the Canadian dream, public policy should focus on providing greater access to affordable homes all along the housing spectrum with the goal of helping people become homeowners.

According to the Ontario Auditor General's 2017 Value-for-Money report on social and affordable housing, nearly 200,000 households are on the waitlist for community housing. Ontario affordable housing stock as a percentage of its population (2%) is much lower than other jurisdictions.

Housing affordability is a growing problem across Canada and disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities. According to 2018 Statistics Canada data, in Ontario, 72% of those who are not a visible minority own their homes, as compared to 43% of black respondents, 50% of Indigenous respondents, and 67% of other visible minorities who own homes. In a similar trend, 71% of heterosexual people are homeowners whereas only 47% of those who identify as homosexual, or bisexual are homeowners.

In OREA's recent survey conducted by Ipsos, 49% of REALTORS® and 65% of consumers signalled support for building more affordable housing for disadvantaged communities and 54% of REALTORS® and 63% of consumers support for building a wider variety of homes.

RECOMMENDATION 1: End exclusionary zoning in Ontario cities.

In many municipalities in Ontario, it is illegal to convert a single-family home into a multi-unit dwelling without a zoning by-law change. This can delay projects and drive additional costs. This practice, along with others like redlining whereby services are denied to residents in certain areas based on their ethnicity or race, are historically discriminatory practices that were influenced by NIMBYism. NIMBYism, referring to a "not in my backyard" mindset, is a phenomenon in which residents of a certain neighbourhood oppose developments like affordable housing based on assumptions about the population that will reside there. The removal of these constraints, particularly exclusionary zoning, is gaining traction in comparable jurisdictions nationally and internationally and is seen by urban planners as a strong remedy for addressing racism and discrimination perpetuated by implicitly biased policies.

OREA's Ipsos survey found that 48% of REALTORS® and 61% of consumers support zoning reform to build more homes, and 41% of REALTORS® and 49% of consumers support reducing exclusionary policies.

The provincial government should use the Planning Act to implement as-of-right zoning to allow the development of "gentle density," including duplexes, semi-detached homes, rowhouses, or stacked townhouses. Gentle density refers to "attached, ground-oriented housing that's denser than a detached house, but with a similar scale and character." New units would be created next to existing density and close transit stations and would not require unnecessary and lengthy case-by-case approvals.

Support for building more affordable housing for disadvantaged communities

49%
REALTOR®

65%
Consumers

Operational Considerations

In addition to NIMBYism, these types of proposals have also come up against barriers like lack of access to capital for those looking to create affordable housing solutions and overall awareness of processes, policies, and regulations. However, there is a growing chorus of support for this policy change. As acknowledged by the Toronto Region Board of Trade in a December 2021 report, Meeting in the middle: A plan to end exclusionary zoning and tackle Ontario's housing crisis, the conversation is no longer about whether there is a missing middle, but about how to address it.

This approach has proven to have positive effects in several jurisdictions in Canada (Edmonton), the United States (Minnesota, Washington, and California), and New Zealand. The City of Toronto has already begun acting on this matter, but the missing middle exists across the province, and as such, all medium to large Ontario municipalities – rural and urban – should take steps to implement these changes.





RECOMMENDATION 2: Reduce government-imposed costs on new rental projects, including duplexes, triplexes, and walk-ups.

Municipalities collect development charges (DCs) and Community benefit charges (CBCs) to help pay for infrastructure associated with new development. The use of DCs and CBCs is based on the principle that development related to growth should pay for itself and not impose a burden on existing residents. They can be an effective policy tool to influence municipal growth and have been proven to improve the well-being of communities, especially low-income and historically disadvantaged ones.

In 2017, the Government of Ontario launched the Development Charges Rebate Program to rebate development charges on new, purpose-built rental housing as a means of encouraging new construction. \$125 million of funding was allocated over five years across 13 municipalities, as part of the program.

The Province should reintroduce this type of time-limited program that rebates provincially governed fees and charges such as DCs and CBCs to encourage the development of more affordable housing. Structuring it as a rebate program would ensure municipalities are not deprived of

the necessary funds to support growth-related costs associated with new developments and will provide tangible incentives to developers to increase supply of affordable housing.

Operational Considerations

The key barrier to offering DC rebates are fiscal constraints for the government, especially in a time where the pandemic is requiring higher than normal social spending. However, the pandemic has also underscored the housing affordability imperative, with low-and-moderate income tenants unable to pay rent and property owners without the income to make needed repairs and pay mortgages.

Looking to other jurisdictions, British Columbia allows all municipalities to adopt by-laws that permit reducing or waiving DCs for certain types of developments such as for-profit affordable rental housing. There is more of a patchwork of DC policies across Ontario. Several municipalities such as City of Toronto, York Region, Greater Sudbury, and Hamilton, among others, either exempt or defer DCs for affordable rental housing, high-density, or mixed-use developments. A province-wide position would provide the framework for increased and more consistent use of this tool.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Build 99,000





Ontario will need an average of 4,000 additional affordable rental homes each year to keep up with the growing demand.

community housing units over the next 10 years to clear the backlog and accommodate future growth.

According to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA), Ontario will need an average of 4,000 additional affordable rental homes each year to keep up with the growing demand. When these projections are combined with the current backlog of 200,000 households on the waiting list, this means that Ontario will need an annual average of 9,900 additional affordable rental homes across the province over the next 10 years to clear the backlog and meet the growing need.

As demonstrated through the National Housing Strategy initiatives, all three levels of government – municipal, provincial, and federal – should continue collaboration with each other and the community housing sector to accelerate development. Different investment vehicles, such as direct contributions, preferential financing rates, tax exemptions and development charge waivers can be used to achieve the goal.

Operational Considerations

The ONPHA made this recommendation three years ago, and the housing deficit has only grown since then. This is a complex undertaking and will require careful coordination and extensive consultation.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Mandate transit-oriented, mixed-income, and high-density avenue development in urban and suburban areas.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is high-density, mixed-use development within walking distance (400-800 metres) of a transit station. Along with increasing housing supply, TOD has been shown to provide a number of benefits including increased transit ridership, reduced traffic congestion and pollution, and sustainable, healthier, more walkable neighbourhoods, among others.

The Government of Ontario recently passed the Transit-Oriented Communities Act, which largely focuses on placing more housing and jobs near four priority subway projects within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The province should continue to progress the implementation of this legislation but should do so with careful thought and intention. As recognized in a recent policy paper from the University of Toronto's School of Cities, Geography, and Planning and the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, there are complex policy challenges associated with implementation, including the ecosystem of public and private stakeholders and their respective responsibilities, resources, and interests.

The province should also work with its municipal partners in examining opportunities to apply this in the rural context as many rural communities are facing the dual challenge of housing affordability and transportation access. There are many models of collaborative rural transportation solutions, such as the Collingwood-Wasaga Beach and Collingwood-Blue Mountains Transit Links, which have emerged and are continuing to evolve in Ontario that may serve as strong candidates for TOD.

Operational Considerations

To realize intended policy outcomes in implementation, transit-oriented communities should be mixed-income, multi-generational, multi-use, environmentally sustainable, and inclusive. Mixed-income, transit-oriented communities can achieve synergistic benefits that

come from bringing the two models together. Notably, this includes affordable housing that does not require households to tradeoff between affordable rents /mortgages and the cost of commuting, making it truly affordable.

There are a variety of tools governments can leverage to generate value and recover cost from development. These include density bonuses and land value capture techniques (such as inclusive zoning and the reduction of government-imposed development costs) to recover a portion of the financial value of intensification to deliver community benefit.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Promote and help scale innovative approaches to affordable housing development.

There are several established and emerging innovative development approaches to addressing affordable housing in Ontario such as laneway, micro, and modular homes; green retrofits; and conversions, among others. These types of homes are intended to address affordability, support environmental sustainability, and drive gentle density; they are often built for members of vulnerable communities.

The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has developed guides that provide consumers with information on how to navigate the complex design and building processes of many innovative developments (i.e., laneway, micro, and modular homes).

The Government of Ontario and its municipal partners can do more to ease regulations related to innovative builds that can increase costs. These regulations include as minimum area, parking, and unit mix. Additionally, housing and not-for-profit sector stakeholders are already working hard to develop and test new solutions. There is a role for all levels of government to support the scale and spread up of new and promising solutions. For example, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Association's National Housing Strategy Solutions Labs offer organizations with funding and expertise to help them solve complex housing problems.

Operational Considerations

As with any innovative solution, more research and exploration on the feasibility, operational considerations, and outcomes are required. For example, there has been some safety concerns regarding tiny homes in the Canadian weather context.

In addition, scaling innovation requires thoughtful planning. According to the Evergreen City Builder Glossary, scalable is defined as “the ability of an organization, system, project or process to adapt, evolve or implement resources

to expand its impact.” Successful scaling requires that those implementing understand the initiatives’ ‘market differentiation, the impact it achieves, how to achieve it, and proof that it is not only transferrable, but has deeper impact once scaled.’

There are several established and emerging innovative development approaches to addressing affordable housing in Ontario...



OBJECTIVE 2: INCORPORATE EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION INTO EXISTING PUBLIC POLICY.

The surveys conducted by OREA to support the development of these recommendations irrefutably show that members of the BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities are experiencing systemic racism as they navigate the real estate and housing sectors. This issue is known to be embedded in legacy systems and policies.

Much like other policy areas, the historic development of housing policy has both implicit and explicit racial bias. A report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on municipal exclusion noted that it has been a longstanding practice to use zoning regulations to shape neighbourhood composition and maintain high land and housing values.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Mandate the equal treatment of all individuals under the Condominium Act to be inclusive of diverse families (e.g., same sex couples/parents).

While the most overtly racist and discriminatory policies have been removed over time, implicitly biased policies still exist and affect vulnerable populations the most. A recent example of this issue is the mounting number of people who have come forward with concerns about the Ontario condominium rules that require units be for “single families,” but as a result, LGBTQ2S+ couples, single parents, and other family types are excluded.

The Province should update the Condominium Act to include a broad and inclusive definition of “single family” to accommodate different family types and compositions. Current case law, such as *Ballingall v Carleton Condominium Corporation*, have opened the door for condominium corporations to adopt a broader definition.

The proposed definition included: “a social unit consisting of parent(s) and their children, whether natural or adopted, and includes other relatives if living with the primary group; a person living alone, whether single, divorced, a widower or a widow; two or more siblings; a single father or mother with son(s) and/or daughter(s); two persons who are married to one another or living together in a conjugal or common-law relationship; two or more unrelated persons who are living together in order to pool their resources and reduce their cost of living, provided that it is clear that their collective intention is to live together permanently; or two unrelated persons who are joint owners of the unit.”

Operational Considerations

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is currently reviewing the Condominium Act. This is an opportune time for OREA to advocate for an inclusive definition of “single family.” Taking a similar focus, California recently eliminated single-family zones by allowing up to four units on existing single-family residential lots. The city of Minneapolis and the state of Oregon have already passed similar measures.

While the most overtly racist & discriminatory policies have been removed over time, implicitly biased policies still exist and affect vulnerable populations the most.



OBJECTIVE 3: HELP DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES ACCESS AFFORDABLE HOME FINANCING & RENTAL SUPPORT.

As housing unaffordability rises in Ontario, helping disadvantaged communities access affordable financing and rental supports is key to removing barriers to homeownership. OREA's survey found that 45% of REALTORS® and 59% of consumers support providing more financial assistance to disadvantaged communities in the renting/leasing or buying/selling of homes.

Historically, BIPOC/LGBTQ2S+ communities have faced racism and discrimination in accessing housing financing. Individuals interviewed by Ipsos identified that financial inequities are often faced by visible minorities, and that stereotypes therein combine to make applicants feel very vulnerable early on, with financial institutions holding the balance of power. Among consumers surveyed who indicated facing racism/discrimination, 22% identified the bank/mortgage provider as the party inflicting the racism/discrimination. 16% of consumers surveyed indicated facing roadblocks during the mortgage process due to their race/ethnicity/gender identity or sexual orientation and 6% even changed their banks/mortgage providers as a result. Additionally, stakeholder organizations confirmed that their membership had also reported facing financing challenges, such as securing small business loans and securing mortgages from traditional institutions at fair rates. Accessing housing financing remains a key roadblock in the home ownership journey for diverse groups and requires system-wide collaboration to address.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Encourage expansion of affordable homeownership programs for disadvantaged communities and have proceeds be re-invested into new social housing stock, grants, rebates, low interest loans, rent subsidies, etc.

In-depth engagement with consumers found that members of the BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities enter the home seeking journey carrying their lived experiences as being seen and treated as the “other”. BIPOC individuals interviewed highlighted that they often started life from a disadvantaged place related to inequality, lack of accessibility, systemic oppression. Most have explained that they have fought an uphill battle their entire lives to even hit a baseline level of quality of life.

Faced with increasing housing unaffordability in Ontario and lack of access to alternative financing, many Ontarians continue to rent, and homeownership remains out-of-reach. When looking at housing affordability data, members of BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities are often in greater need. For example, in 2016, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation published data on core housing needs in the country. At a national level, the data found that Indigenous households were 1.4 times more often in core housing need than non-Indigenous households. 18% of immigrant-led households were in core housing need, 5% greater than the overall number of Canadian households in core housing need. Financial policy interventions serve as one tool to equitably support disadvantaged communities in housing affordability.



Support providing more financial assistance to disadvantaged communities in the renting/leasing or buying/selling of homes.

45%
REALTOR®

59%
Consumers

The following homeownership programs are examples of effective solutions that can make homeownership a reality for disadvantaged communities:

- **Options for Homes.** Options for Homes is a developer exclusively focused on making homeownership more affordable in Canada, offering supports like the Options Ready Program that includes access to a shared equity down payment. There is opportunity for government to support developers like Options for Homes that have established affordable homeownership programs.
- **Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Homeownership Program.** Established by a former government, this program allocated a specific amount of funding to every region in Ontario to assist low to moderate-income rental households to purchase affordable homes by providing interest-free down payment assistance loans.
- **Rent-to-own model.** In a rent-to-own model, property owners provide tenants the option to purchase the property after a certain period at an agreed-upon price. Advance deposits and rent are used as down payment on the property. New Zealand has also seen the successful adoption of the rent-to-own model as part of its \$400M Progressive Home Ownership Fund.

Accordingly, OREA should advocate for the Ontario Government and municipalities to work with developers and community housing providers to develop or expand homeownership programs that accelerate the path to homeownership for disadvantaged communities. The proceeds from these programs should be re-invested into affordable housing solutions for disadvantaged communities, such as new social housing stock, grants, rebates, low interest loans, and rent subsidies.

Operational Considerations

A government-administered homeownership program, like rent-to-own, is a complex undertaking and will require long-term advocacy efforts from OREA. There is an opportunity to engage the Provincial Government and municipal associations beginning with a pilot program that can further investigate the financing, feasibility, and effectiveness of these homeownership programs in Ontario.



Faced with increasing housing unaffordability in Ontario and lack of access to alternative financing, many Ontarians continue to rent, and homeownership remains out-of-reach.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Engage major financial institutions to address inequities for BIPOC community.

Consumers will interact with various financial institutions, such as banks and mortgage brokers, throughout their home ownership journey. Key processes like mortgage pre-approval, loan applications, and underwriting have been criticized for involving racism/discrimination towards BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities. For example, an investigation by CBC Marketplace in March 2021 revealed that Black homeowners experience more discrimination in the home appraisal process than other visible minorities. Some of these inequities are systemic and therefore, require system-wide solutions. From the REALTOR® perspective, nearly half (47%) of all REALTORS® surveyed agreed that engaging with banks and mortgage providers to ensure equal access to financing for racialized and ethnocultural groups/LGBTQ2S+ communities would be a helpful initiative for OREA to implement.

OREA should establish a Task Force or working group to bring together key stakeholders involved in the real estate financing process to identify and address financial inequities. These can include more scrutiny for underwriting practices, more anonymity in the pre-approval process, and more diverse decision-makers. The Task Force should also have representation from BIPOC communities with lived experience.

Operational Considerations

Implementation of this recommendation is highly dependent on stakeholder buy-in and willingness to participate in such a Task Force. It is also resource and time-intensive, as extensive coordination will be required between various stakeholder groups. As a result, OREA should begin engagement with associations and interest groups to understand broader perspectives on the topic. There should be a preliminary focus on tangible and feasible actions to create momentum.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Advocate for a review of Ontario Residential Tenancies Act (2006), with the goal of improving access to affordable homes for disadvantaged communities.

The Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) resolves landlord tenant disputes and eviction cases, and keeps landlords and tenants informed of their rights and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). These disputes can include instances of racism or discrimination experienced by the landlord or tenant. In these scenarios, the Ontario Human Rights Code is the primary source for human rights law. However, some situations like alleging a landlord refused to provide them with a rental unit based on discrimination are handled by the Human Rights Tribunal.

Given the RTA and LTB's mandate of dispute resolution over racism and discriminatory behaviour, there is opportunity to conduct a review of both the Act and Board's role in ensuring adequate protections – and enforcements thereof – for both landlords and tenants. This can help reduce the level of racism and discrimination in the rental process. Overall, the legislation and Board should be reviewed with a DEI lens to ensure better access to affordable homes for disadvantaged communities.

Operational Considerations

Amendments to the RTA or LTB have historically come up against resistance and therefore, implementation of this recommendation may be a long-term advocacy effort. OREA should seek support from other landlord and tenant advocacy organizations, such as the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario or Ontario Landlords Association to strengthen its case to government. There is also opportunity for OREA to further explore this issue through its research efforts or a Review Task Force as was established for REBBA.

OBJECTIVE 4: ENHANCED DEI EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES FOR REALTORS® AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.

OREA's survey found that REALTORS® acknowledge that systemic discrimination exists, but its prevalence is more anecdotal for them. Meanwhile, BIPOC individuals report experiencing the most overt and unconscious biases. Despite these observed trends, there is currently a lack of formalized or mandatory DEI education or training for prospective or active REALTORS® in Ontario.



RECOMMENDATION 10: Support the inclusion of mandatory DEI education in Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO) registration and continuing education.

In recent years, many organizational and institutional boards have made significant commitments to recognizing the importance of implementing DEI education curriculums. These commitments are seen as being critical for the future success of various organizations. DEI education and training is essential for cultivating a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive work environment rooted in a culture of mutual respect and equity such that all members of our community feel safe, possess a strong sense of belonging, and are empowered to thrive.

There is an opportunity for OREA to advocate for the creation of a unique training curriculum tailored to the Ontario Real Estate sector for both prospective and established REALTORS®.

Incorporating education and training enables individuals to recognize, acknowledge, and address systemic racism and the unconscious biases that each of us holds within the workplace. DEI education and training also clearly defines roles and responsibilities with respect to creating an environment free of discrimination and harassment, with avenues available for addressing concerns.

Operational Considerations

There is recognition that optional DEI education may encounter low uptake while mandatory training may face some degree of backlash. However, optional DEI education can create further gaps within the membership. The significance of DEI requires a consistent approach to educating members and signaling the importance of preventing racist/discriminatory behaviour – and therefore, the DEI education should be mandatory for both new and existing registrants. Additionally, significant buy-in from RECO, certification granting institutions (Humber College), and brokerages are required in order to implement an effective DEI education program.

The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) Canada has recently implemented a DEI education program to “confront all forms of racism, intolerance and bigotry anywhere in their organizations and in their industry.” Similarly, The National Association of REALTORS® in the United States has developed an *Actionable Roadmap for Local Association Diversity and Inclusion*, in addition to publishing a suite of education and training resources to “provide perspectives and resources from around the country for associations to reference and share in order to keep the conversation moving forward.”



BIPOC individuals report experiencing the most overt and unconscious biases.

OBJECTIVE 5: A PROCESS FOR REGISTERING AND INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS, THAT IS EASY TO ACCESS AND NAVIGATE, AND RESULTS IN STRONGER PENALTIES FOR RACIST OR DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOUR BY REALTORS®.

It is widely acknowledged that there is no easy, efficient and safe reporting mechanism for the buyer or REALTORS® and the burden of proof is too high for an industry that is veiled in secrecy and relies on the spoken vs. written word among REALTOR® interactions. Additionally, if REALTORS® do bear witness to discrimination, they weigh the pros and cons, and with few exceptions, determine that it's not worth addressing because they feel powerless to affect change.

More than half of the REALTORS® surveyed by Ipsos identified the other party's REALTOR® as the source of discrimination against them. Such peer-to-peer discrimination is felt more widely by women. Ipsos' qualitative research also found that both

the BIPOC and LGBTQ2S+ communities said that discrimination comes from brokers, REALTORS®, and sellers. This warrants a higher level of scrutiny on REALTOR® behaviour and the need for stronger penalties when such behaviour is reported. 57% of member respondents and 73% of consumer respondents support OREA advocating for stronger penalties and better enforcement against REALTORS® who discriminate and behave in racist manners while conducting business. Specifically, 47% of member respondents support OREA's role in strengthening the REALTOR® Code of Ethics enforcement to provide Members with another avenue for dealing with racist or discriminatory behaviour among REALTORS®.



RECOMMENDATION 11: Collaborate with RECO, CREA, and local Boards to establish a process and define reporting and investigation roles & responsibilities.

There is mounting evidence to support the claim that BIPOC home seekers experience discrimination at a higher level than the non-BIPOC population. Despite this, OREA's recent survey found that if a BIPOC individual faced racism, 27% would likely not report it. Primary reasons for not reporting include not being able to change anyone's mind; it being difficult to prove; not believing action would be taken; believing it's a long and tedious process; or not being sure where to go. Given that most consumers (80%) aren't sure where to report the discrimination, most (75%) expect their REALTOR® to be involved in some way to resolve the issue.

OREA's research also revealed that generally speaking, REALTORS® are hesitant to report incidents of racism/discrimination. While 58% say they would probably report it, this drops to 49% among Black REALTORS®. Difficultly proving it, not expecting change, and perceived lack of action were highlighted as the leading causes for not reporting discrimination. In addition, two in three REALTORS® surveyed weren't certain where to report these incidents. Among the one in three who are, RECO (56%), the Human Rights Commission (56%) and brokerage management (47%) are the starting points for most.

With these realities in mind, it is evident that a timely, effective, transparent, and safe reporting mechanism is needed for both home seekers and REALTORS® to seek recourse for discriminatory acts. OREA should be encouraged by the fact that survey respondents were overwhelmingly positive about OREA engaging industry partners – like RECO, CREA, and local Boards – on this issue and appreciate that OREA has a role to play in education and advocacy.

There is also an opportunity for OREA to help address this issue by co-designing a whistleblower policy with industry partners to empower REALTORS® to report instances of discrimination. Doing so will help to empower honest and moral individuals and increase accountability for discriminatory acts.

Operational Considerations

There are currently a couple of different mechanisms and processes in Ontario for filing discrimination complaints experienced in the real estate sector. For instance, RECO has established a complaints process to ensure fair and flexible handling of complaints about the conduct of real estate professionals and those holding themselves out as such. Additionally, The Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on human rights and rental housing (2009) governs discrimination complaints experienced in the rental housing market. However, there have been many documented instances of these processes being very time consuming and arduous. As a result, a reporting mechanism that ensures minimal administrative burdens for complainants and includes those from minority groups at all levels is desirable.

Although implementing a whistleblower policy is perceived as an effective mechanism for combating discrimination in the real estate sector, it should be noted that making an accusation of discrimination can transform workplace relationships or in some instances a whistleblower may be perceived as “disloyal” by the organization. Despite these considerations, whistleblower policies are very common in the private sector, as evidenced by The National Association of REALTORS® *Whistleblower Policy*.



Support OREA advocating for stronger penalties and better enforcement against REALTORS® who discriminate and behave in racist manners.

57%
Member
Responents

73%
Consumer
Responents

RECOMMENDATION 12: Encourage local uptake and enforcement of the updated REALTOR® Code of Ethics.

CREA's REALTOR® Code of Ethics establishes a standard of conduct, which in many respects exceeds basic legal requirements. This standard ensures that the rights and interests of consumers of real estate services are protected. As a condition of membership, all REALTORS® agree to abide by the Code. The first code was approved in 1913; members approved the first code of ethics specific to CREA members in

1959. The Code has since been amended many times to reflect changes in the real estate marketplace, the needs of property owners and the perceptions and values of society.

Only 26% of REALTORS® who responded to OREA's survey believe that the REALTOR® Code is effective at dealing with racism among REALTORS®. Given these barriers, it is not surprising that only 3% of REALTORS® have actually reported an incident of racism/discrimination in the past.





Administration of the REALTOR® Code is left to local real estate boards who often lack resources and expertise to conduct hearings on issues under the Code. As a result, enforcement of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics is infrequent and largely ineffective in curbing unethical activity.

To ensure the REALTOR® Code is used to promote higher professionalism and anti-discrimination, OREA should advocate for stronger local or provincial enforcement of the Code of Ethics with incentives for Boards to partner or share enforcement responsibilities.

Operational Considerations

Lessons can be learned from the United States, where the National Association of REALTORS® played a strong role in ensuring local Boards met their obligation in enforcing the Code of Ethics, including outlining compliance obligations and consequences of non-compliance in their by-laws.

OBJECTIVE 6: ENCOURAGE MORE DIVERSE ONTARIANS TO JOIN THE REAL ESTATE PROFESSION AND SERVE IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP.

In OREA's recent survey of its membership, of which 1974 members responded, 46% of those were women, ~28% were BIPOC, and ~6% identified as LGBTQ2S+. These sample demographics are one of many indicators that more diversity is needed within the sector. While Boards in organized real estate are starting to see more diversity, there is much more that can be done.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Support DEI recruitment and hiring practices at the local Board, brand, brokerage, and individual level.

There is limited analysis available on the level of diversity at the local board, brand, brokerage, and individual level. However, there is widespread acknowledgement that more active efforts are required to attract diversity in the sector. For example, 42% of REALTORS® believe that increasing the diversity of its volunteer leaders on OREA's Board of Directors and Committees would be helpful. This view is more widely supported amongst respondents who identified as BIPOC (55%). Furthermore, research shows that inclusion is strengthened through greater representation of diverse talent, particularly in leadership roles.

OREA can play an influential role in fostering more diversity within the sector through offering support to boards, brokerages and brands on how they can incorporate DEI recruiting and hiring practices. Additionally, deliberate pathways should be established for diverse leadership at the local level to join provincial leadership structures (i.e., OREA Board and Committees). A wide variety of research and resources are available on DEI recruiting and hiring and so to consolidate and contextualize best practices, OREA should commission development of DEI-

informed recruitment and hiring guidelines for the membership. This will ensure that local boards, brands, and brokerages have a starting point of evidence-informed and relevant resources.

Operational Considerations

Financial and human resources will be required for OREA to equip membership with DEI recruiting and hiring guidelines. Where necessary, OREA should engage external DEI experts to ensure resources reflect high-quality standards. OREA can also look to organizations within and beyond the real estate sector that have adopted best practices. For example, Ryerson University has publicly shared detailed Guidelines for Recruiting and Hiring Diverse Faculty. Reporting mechanisms will be key to monitoring progress and ensuring accountability among local Boards, brands, and brokerages. As such, OREA should explore and deploy appropriate measurement tools to gauge effectiveness of DEI recruitment and hiring guidelines or level of diversity in leadership. A notable case study of this is the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, who recently publicly disclosed the level of diversity in its staff and leadership, along with targets through 2025.

In OREA's recent survey of its membership, of which 1,974 members responded

46%
Women

28%
BIPOC

6%
LGBTQ2S+



OBJECTIVE 7: INCREASED AWARENESS AMONGST MEMBERSHIP & CONSUMERS.

Based on OREA's stakeholder engagement and surveys, REALTORS® identifying as Black, LGBTQ2S+, and women are significantly more likely to say racism and discrimination is a serious problem than non-diverse communities. It was also found that in the absence of overt displays of discrimination, REALTORS® said they find it challenging to recognize what are and what are not displays of prejudice, unconscious or not. These findings suggest that there is an opportunity to raise awareness among REALTORS® about these realities.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Develop a strategic communications strategy to promote awareness, new research, and resources surrounding the issues.

Knowledge and awareness gaps exist when it comes to DEI-related issues and activities in the Ontario real estate and housing sectors, and research indicates that there is appetite for OREA to play a role in addressing these gaps. 61% of consumers surveyed feel that OREA making statements in the media in response to instances of racism and discrimination would be beneficial. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from REALTORS® who were engaged by OREA for interviews on this topic and appreciated that OREA has a role to play in education and advocacy.

Research also showed that there is low awareness of proper complaint mechanisms to report incidents of racism and discrimination in Ontario: 34% of REALTORS® know where to lodge a complaint; 32% remain unaware; and 34% are unsure. A majority of consumers had never heard of the Real Estate Council of Ontario (RECO) before this survey (52%). Even among those who had heard of it, very few believe they had a good understanding of what RECO does. This is a key area for communication enhancement.

OREA does not currently have a set of policies or a strategy to guide the development of communications related to DEI, racism, and discrimination in the sector. The development of both an internal and external communications strategy would identify core audiences, key messages, where knowledge gaps exist, and how to address them.

- An example of an OREA communications initiative is to develop a policy that guides staff and leadership when drafting statements or reactions to issues of social injustice. These are currently drafted on an ad hoc basis, and a clear policy will prevent piecemeal communications and provide set criteria for when OREA will release comments.
- Examples of external communications initiatives include issuing public statements, sharing case studies of racist/discriminatory behaviour seen in the sector, promoting DEI best practices demonstrated at the local level, sharing OREA's progress on DEI with the membership, participating in panel discussions at relevant conferences, and creating DEI tool kits for brokerages (e.g., sharing training materials, pride stickers, directory of LGBTQ2S+ and BIPOC real estate community groups, etc.)



Operational Considerations

While many organizations have anti-racism/discrimination policies and communications plans, OREA will have to develop its own that are tailored to Ontario's unique context. This will require Board and staff time to draft the initial communications policies and strategies as well as ongoing monitoring and development of communications related to racism and discrimination.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Leverage the Centre for Leadership Development to design and deploy DEI content for local Boards, brands, brokerages and associations.

When asked about OREA-led initiatives to address racism/discrimination, about half of all REALTORS® identified providing training on diversity and inclusion as having potential for high impact. 63% of consumers believe mandatory training on diversity and inclusiveness would be a useful program.

OREA's Centre for Leadership Development currently delivers courses for members and volunteers on a range of leadership topics. The Centre also provides tutorials and tools on crisis communications, conflict resolution, media

training, and social media messaging, among others. The existing platform has potential to host additional content on DEI.

OREA should invest in the development of DEI content such as training, webinars, and other practical tools and templates for local real estate boards, brokerages, and associations. While the Ontario real estate landscape is unique, the Centre could look to similar organization in other jurisdictions to understand the types of courses and tools that are working well. For example, the National Association of REALTORS® in the United States offers a number of resources, including online workshops, courses, and diversity and inclusion grants.

Operational Considerations

OREA has expertise in leadership course development but no internal expertise in DEI education. The development of any material should be guided by credible sources, including people with lived experience, which could be achieved through additional resources or through a partnership. Guidelines should also be established to manage content selection, intellectual property rights, and recruitment of credible trainers to deliver the materials.

OBJECTIVE 8: INCREASED EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN OREA'S STAFF AND LEADERSHIP.

There is a significant body of evidence suggesting that diverse perspectives will always lead to stronger decisions, and that inclusion is critical to realizing the benefits of diversity. Increasingly, it is becoming the norm for organizations of all shapes and sizes to apply diversity and inclusion principles to how they form their Boards, as they are recognized to be aligned with broader principles of good governance.



RECOMMENDATION 16: Review OREA governance structures, and Board selection processes and policies.

In response to OREA’s survey, 42% of REALTORS® support the organization increasing the diversity of its volunteer leaders on the Board of Directors and Committees, and 63% of consumers support ensuring that OREA’s senior management and Board are diverse. Interviews with representatives from organizations that represent OREA’s BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and women-identifying stakeholders also identified improved representation in OREA’s leadership and annual training as important action areas.

Effective diversity and inclusion practices at a not-for-profit board require intentional and customized recruitment, on-boarding, and an openness to real change. OREA should undertake a comprehensive governance review with a DEI lens to identify where changes could be made to promote greater representation at the Board level, creating pathways to provincial leadership from the local boards.

Operational Considerations

As the review is conducted, and opportunities are identified, it will be important to consider that the Board cannot unilaterally change governance structure, and that any changes to composition must be put to a member vote.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Leverage OREA’s existing internship and mentorship programs to facilitate greater recruitment of disadvantaged youth.

Internships are the training ground for OREA as an organization and for the real estate industry more broadly. Diverse interns will promote more diverse leadership. Research also indicates that university or college graduates who are most likely to find meaningful employment directly out of college or university are the ones who had access to certain programs such as internships and scholarships. Additionally, OREA’s Board mentorship program provides another opportunity for OREA Board members to mentor and prepare young leaders, often at the local Board level, for provincial leadership roles.

OREA is well positioned to leverage its existing internship and mentorship programs to facilitate a greater DEI focus by promoting the recruitment of disadvantaged youth. This program may include hiring disadvantaged youth to intern at OREA, recruiting diverse young leaders to join the OREA Board mentorship program, helping match local boards, brokerages, or other industry-related organizations with interns from disadvantaged communities, or dedicating marketing efforts to promote real estate as a career within under-represented communities.

Operational Considerations

Research shows that interns from vulnerable populations often experience feelings of insecurity and self-doubt, which stems from the tokenization of minority groups that can make them hyper-visible and highly scrutinized. It will be important that this type of program should be co-designed with individuals with lived experience to help create a truly inclusive program.

63% of consumers support ensuring that OREA’s senior management & Board are diverse.

OBJECTIVE 9: SUSTAINED DEI EFFORTS AND PROGRESS AT OREA.

Beyond governance, OREA must integrate DEI into its day-to-day operations. As the key driver for these recommendations, OREA should ensure DEI efforts are appropriately prioritized and resourced.

RECOMMENDATION 18: Create a resource to lead this portfolio of work across the organization.

It is widely accepted that DEI efforts require time and resources, including dedicated expertise. A 2020 LinkedIn study found the number of people with the title “head of diversity” more than doubled worldwide between 2015 and 2020, while the “director of diversity” title rose 75% and “chief diversity officer,” rose by 68%. This reflects not only the increasing emphasis on DEI in organizations, but the best practice to make this a leadership priority.

Given the scope of the PAC’s recommendations, OREA should hire a full-time resource to lead this portfolio of work. The resource should be supported by OREA staff and leadership, external facilitators and/or DEI experts needed to implement the initiatives. The job description for this position should also include measurement and reporting responsibilities with respect to the PAC’s recommendations, to ensure the Board can monitor progress made. The progress should also be reported regularly to the membership.

Operational Considerations

OREA should consider budgeting and recruitment needs for this position as part of its annual work planning processes and budgets brought to the Board. Recruitment and hiring for this position should leverage DEI best practices, including hiring a member of the BIPOC and/or LGTBQ2S+ communities, as well as a professional with experience leading DEI initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 19: Strengthen DEI across OREA HR policies, practices, and procedures as well as procurement and investment practices.

There is a growing awareness of DEI as an organizational best practice and many organizations are taking a hard look at their internal operations to identify opportunities for improvement. OREA should specifically review its internal procurement, investment, and HR policies and processes. OREA’s forms should ensure the use of unbiased and inclusive language. A similar action was recently taken by the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board, who changed the use of “master” to “primary” when referring to the main or principal bedrooms in forms. OREA should also be more conscious of who they choose as suppliers – such as third-party firms or event speakers – and investment partners. A growing number of socially conscious companies are addressing racial injustice through supplier diversity programs that promote an inclusive approach to procurement. Many with large investment portfolios are also engaging in impact investing to support social causes like housing affordability. Finally, OREA must also look at how it fosters DEI within the workplace, from recruiting diversity to fostering an inclusive culture.

OREA should begin with an operational review of member-facing processes and forms, as well as key internal procurement, investment, and HR processes to identify opportunities to integrate DEI best practices. Processes (e.g., job postings) should be redesigned to reflect DEI best practices. The operational review should be conducted by an objective third-party to gather an unbiased perspective on OREA operations. The review should also engage a diverse team of staff and leadership to provide varied perspectives based on their professional expertise and personal lived experience.

A 2020 LinkedIn study found the number of people with the title “head of diversity” more than doubled worldwide between 2015 and 2020

Operational Considerations

Many of these process changes will also require individual behavioural changes, and therefore, change management best practices should be adopted in the implementation. DEI training has begun at OREA and should continue to be prioritized for staff and leadership to promote greater awareness and reflection of racist or discriminatory processes within the organization.



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