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Almost two years after embarking on what was to be a year-long endeavour, Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC) has released the final report of the Kingston Speaks Inclusion project.

The role of KCHC in this unique partnership with Kingston Police (KP) was to support KP in a series of community consultation forums. The focus of the consultations was to gather input from the broader Kingston community. KCHC agreed to facilitate culturally responsive sessions for equity-deserving and underrepresented populations. KP committed to creating a more inclusive dialogue with the Kingston community, and stated explicitly that the project would inform the creation of a Kingston Police Community Inclusion Council.

While the final report and recommendations were presented to Kingston Police in July of 2022, and despite frequent requests from KCHC, as of April 2023, KP had not yet agreed to a collaborative release of the report or to accept KSI's implementation plan. At this point, ten months after the submission of the completed report and one year after the agreed-upon end date of this project, KCHC felt strongly that they had to honour their commitment to share the report with the agencies and community members who bravely shared their thoughts, experiences, and opinions over the course of the consultation process.

On April 24, KCHC sent a formal letter to the Acting Chief indicating disappointment in the lack of progress and their intention to share the report publicly, in order to complete the final KCHC deliverable of this project. Hearing no response, on April 28, KCHC sent the report and an update letter to all organizations and people who had been part of the project, and published it on the KSI webpage (<https://kchc.ca/weller-avenue/ksi/>).

Kingston Police have since shared the report via a media release dated May 4, along with a statement expressing commitment to EDI work and some of the recommendations in the report.

This isn't adequate, says Roger Romero, KSI Project Lead, adding: "Kingston Police should publicly outline the measures they have taken to improve relationships with equity-deserving communities. KP owes the Kingston community a transparent and fulsome outline of their EDI related activities, including measures of accountability to track their progress."

The KP media release points to a plan to redesign the role of an officer devoted to EDI. The KSI team worked with two EDI officers at KP over the span of the project, and were grateful for their support and efforts. "Both KP EDI Officers demonstrated their commitment to advance EDI initiatives and supporting Kingston community members," stated Giselle Valarezo, KSI Project Researcher.

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KP also indicates that they have used KSI report recommendations in the creation of their 2023-2026 Strategic Business Plan, yet, despite multiple requests, KP leadership never provided KCHC with an opportunity to review how the KSI report, written by the KCHC team, was integrated into the KP Strategic Plan. “The KSI Report reflects the voice of Kingston community members, who are seeking more accountability and transparency from Kingston Police. Kingston Police has a responsibility to follow through with their commitment to form a community-based council that will keep Kingston Police accountable,” explained Valarezo.

Overall, says Romero, the outcomes of this project are disappointing and disheartening. “KCHC was entrusted with collecting feedback from the community on how KP could integrate more equitable and inclusive practices. Many community members were reluctant to share their testimonies and stories, as they were concerned that KP would remain status quo. KCHC promised all participants that this process would result in meaningful change.”

Wendy Vuyk, Director, Community Health at KCHC adds, “We feel that the community will be disappointed not only in how KP leadership has dismissed the KSI team and its work, but that KP has clearly not prioritized an equitable and inclusive cultural transformation. Unfortunately, Kingston community members’ original concerns that the KSI project would not result in transformative change have come to fruition.”

Vuyk continues, “KCHC maintains our commitment to the people who participated in this project, and we will continue to support the progressive momentum that is underway to drive meaningful change in EDIIA in our community.”

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