

May 21st, 2018

Dear Distinguished Members of York Regional Council:



Thank you for this opportunity to present CIFAL Atlanta's support for the *Inclusion Charter for York Region*. CIFAL Atlanta is a member of a network of 17 country-based training centers located across the globe that were founded by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to strengthen the capacities of government authorities, the private sector, and civil society stakeholders.

As a UNITAR Associated Fellow and the director of CIFAL Atlanta, I recognize the critical role that Inclusion Charters like this play in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

York Region's Inclusion Charter initiative is wholly aligned with the core of what the UNITED NATIONS Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are meant to represent in communities throughout our world. Adopted by the United Nations in 2016 they have been designed to achieve the extraordinary goals of fighting inequality and injustice, ending poverty and combatting climate change by the year 2030. The SDGs apply to *all* nations and do not differentiate between "developed" and "developing" countries. Each of us has an integral role to play in achieving the SDGs.

The interrelationship between the SDGs and the *Inclusion Charter for York Region* is evident. For example, the Charter represents a commitment to creating an inclusive environment with equality for all and an environment where everyone has an opportunity to develop to their full potential and participate freely in society. Like the SDGs, the Charter is dedicated to aligning organizations for the creation of inclusive environments that celebrate all diversity and strive for equality to allow for full participation and freedom. In addition, the Charter clearly advocates for diversity and inclusion across the community to ensure a welcoming environment whereby all people feel like they belong and can access the same opportunities as others. Finally, the Charter promotes peaceful, accountable and transparent institutions and legislation that support human rights and accessibility, thereby effectively protecting the rights of all citizens in the York region.

CIFAL Atlanta has been involved in and supported the *Inclusion Charter for York Region* process since May of 2017 when a CIFAL Atlanta board member and I had the distinct pleasure of visiting York Region and experiencing the unsurpassed hospitality received by many of your colleagues from within the Regional Municipality of York, York Regional Police and multiple members of faith-based organizations within your community. Since that time, we have been kept abreast of the important progress being made in drafting the *Inclusion Charter for York Region*, including the participatory approach used to gain critical community support via community consultations, local events and festivals with community focus groups and meetings with member organizations in your Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group. CIFAL Atlanta recognizes the collaborative approach used to develop the *Inclusion Charter for York Region* as a leading practice and innovative model that communities around the world could use to become more inclusive and as such, CIFAL Atlanta and UNITAR have lent their logos to the Charter in recognition of this support.

The *Inclusion Charter for York Region* beautifully highlights the exceptional value that York Region places on diversity and the benefits and strengths, both economically and culturally, that it brings to a community. CIFAL Atlanta congratulates York Region on the creation of the *Inclusion Charter for York Region* and fully recognizes its significant contribution to furthering the United Nations Agenda 2030. We look forward to partnering with you at any opportunity to help carry your welcoming message of acceptance, understanding, and respect both within and beyond York Region.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Serena Newhall'.

Serena Newhall
CIFAL Atlanta Executive Director