

Responding to the June 2020 Hate Crime at Daniels DuEast Condominium Construction - March 2022 Update

Content Warning

Please note this summary report engages with potentially disturbing content related to racism and racial violence. Please take care when reading.

Background and Context

On June 26, 2020, a hanging noose was found on a Daniels construction site located at the corner of Dundas Street East and Sumach Street in Regent Park. In the week following the hate crime incident, the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA) reached out to Mitchell Cohen, President & CEO of Daniels, requesting information on Daniels' response to the incident. In response to the above request, Daniels prepared a comprehensive report and co-hosted a town hall for community members to share information about how the incident was being addressed.

How Daniels is Confronting Systemic Racism

Given the history of anti-Black racism across North America, including in Canada, Daniels understands that our response to the hate crime at the DuEast Construction site must be multifaceted, collaborative and most importantly, ongoing. In seeking to address the hate crime that took place on June 26, 2020, Daniels has taken action to address the incident directly, and has also taken a leadership role in creating space for dialogue, working to addressing systemic and anti-Black racism with stakeholders across the construction industry. Furthermore, Daniels' People and Culture team and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee have reflected on and continue to make changes to internal policies and procedures to ensure Daniels operated workplaces are safe and inclusive.

Response to the Hate Crime Incident

- **Public Statement:** In the hours following the discovery of hate paraphernalia, Daniels' President & CEO, Mitchell Cohen, released a public statement. In this public statement, Mitchell was unequivocal in naming the incident as a hate crime and reaffirmed that there is zero-tolerance for racism, prejudice and hate on Daniels' construction sites and within the organization as a whole.
- **All-Workers Meeting:** Daniels initiated a series of All-Workers Meetings on all Daniels construction sites across the GTA starting with the DuEast site on the first workday following the hate crime (Monday, June 29, 2020) before any work commenced. The content of these meetings reiterated Daniels' disgust at the hate crime that took place, reinforced that there is zero tolerance for racism and hate on our construction sites and within our organization, and reaffirmed our commitment to stand against racism and prejudice. Over 900 workers attended the All-Workers Meetings.
- **Investigations:** Immediately upon discovery of the hate paraphernalia on the DuEast construction site, Daniels filed a report with the Toronto Police Service, and launched its own internal investigation led by independent third-party experts who specialize in health and safety in the workplace. The internal investigation concluded that a noose was tied from an old rope that had been hanging from the roof of the construction site and that this noose was likely directed at one or more of Daniels' Black employees as a form of harassment or threat of workplace violence. Unfortunately, the investigator was unable to determine who committed this heinous act and indicated that it was an open question as to who tied the noose, whether internal or external to the project.

- **Participation in Community Actions:** Since the incident, Daniels has supported community events organized by community residents to express solidarity with the Black community and call attention to systemic racism, both within the construction industry, and society at large.
- **Site Signage and Ongoing Efforts:** In 2020, Daniels took additional steps to protect racialized workers from discrimination on its construction sites by posting clear messaging to all workers on sites regarding acceptable standards of conduct on our projects and improved training to all employees. In addition, Daniels worked with Crime Stoppers in 2021 to launch a campaign to encourage anyone with information about the DuEast hate crime to report anonymously. Crime Stoppers posters were placed on all Daniels construction sites in Regent Park, and pamphlets were distributed to over 900 workers on all Daniels construction sites across the GTA. Letters with campaign details were also sent to the management of all trades that have been contracted by Daniels between 2020 and 2021. Crime Stoppers received 3 tips through this process, of which one was forwarded on to the Toronto Police Service. However, no conclusive tips were brought forward and the person responsible for the incident on the DuEast construction site has not been identified.
- **Social Justice and Local Economic Development through Art:** Art has often served as an important and engaging tool for social justice. As part of Daniels' local art procurement program, Daniels commissioned an artwork from a Black artist to be permanently displayed within the publicly accessible office lobby at DuEast. The art piece was selected with input from the RPNA and focused on storytelling around the Black experience in North America. The plaque accompanying the art piece provides details of the hate crime incident and how Daniels is addressing racism and discrimination.

Organization-Level Response

- **Anti-Discrimination Policy:** Daniels had an existing Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy and Program but has also developed a specific Anti-Discrimination Policy. Daniels teams are also working to implement a policy whereby all trades contracted by Daniels will be required to have an Anti-Discrimination Policy developed in the coming year.
- **Data Collection:** Daniels recognizes that data collection is crucial for the development of equitable internal policies and processes. As a result, Daniels' People and Culture Team has begun collecting demographic data of all current employees and will be implementing an applicant tracking system for everyone who applies for employment at Daniels.
- **Hiring Guideline:** Daniels' People and Culture Team has developed and is implementing policies whereby hiring managers must ensure that two out of three final candidates selected for interview for any job opening must belong to equity-deserving groups. We have also launched an anti-bias training for hiring managers to address unconscious bias and eliminate barriers for potential applicants. The Daniels team is also working on a Hiring Toolkit that will provide hiring managers best practices for inclusive hiring.
- **BlackNorth Initiative:** Daniels has signed the BlackNorth Initiative (BNI) CEO Pledge. The goal of BNI is to hold major industry leaders accountable to take action and reshape corporate structures that uphold anti-Black systemic racism against Black Canadians. Daniels is working with BNI to identify black artists or artist groups to lease the Work-Live studios in Regent Park and is targeting potential applicants with a tie to Regent Park in the outreach process.
- **United Way of Greater Toronto – Inclusive Local Economic Opportunity (ILEO) Initiative:** Daniels has also signed the United Way ILEO Charter. The ILEO Initiative brings together the private, public, community sectors, and labour to find innovative ways to reduce gaps in economic prosperity in the GTA, and to create lasting inclusive economic vitality at the neighbourhood level. The ILEO Charter includes commitments to living wages, social procurement, workforce development and inclusive hiring practices. Signatories including Daniels are asked to report progress in these areas annually.

- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Training:** Daniels has launched mandatory Unconscious Bias and training for all Daniels employees, including the executive team. Daniels' Social Impact team developed and delivered a specific DEI and anti-racism (with a focus on anti-Black racism) training to all Daniels employees in 2021. Daniels has also incorporated a specific training around Indigenous education.
- **Other Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives:** In addition to diversity, equity and inclusion training, Daniels' People and Culture team has launched a number of other DEI initiatives to create a space for internal dialogue, including a DEI Committee and DEI Forums for employees.

Dialogue and Collaborations with Industry Peers and Stakeholders

- **Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) Anti-Racism Initiatives:** Daniels is actively participating in RESCON's Anti-Racism initiatives. Heela Omarkhail, Vice President of Social Impact at Daniels is a co-chair the Training and Education sub-Committee.
- **Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) Initiatives:** Daniels is actively participating in discussions with BILD, which is the voice of the residential building and land development industries in the Greater Toronto Area. A key outcome of this participation is the creation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, which is co-chaired by Ginette Battikha, Vice President of People and Culture at Daniels.

For a copy of the comprehensive Report available in English, please email Fatima Saya, Senior Manager of Social Impact at The Daniels Corporation: fsaya@danielscorp.com