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COMBATTING  
HATE

ISLAMOPHOBIA  
AND ITS IMPACT ON  
MUSLIMS IN

CANADA

Report of the Standing Senate  
Committee on Human Rights

The Honourable Salma Ataullahjan, Chair  
The Honourable Wanda Elaine Thomas Bernard, Deputy Chair



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (the committee) wishes to thank all of the witnesses who appeared as part of this study, as well as the many communities that welcomed us to their neighbourhoods, their mosques, and their schools.

Testifying to a parliamentary committee can be an intimidating process, particularly when recounting traumatic experiences. Across Canada, Muslim communities have extended their generosity and shown their courage, providing the committee with a better understanding of the many ways in which Islamophobia affects their lives and wellbeing.

The committee was moved by the resilience of Muslim communities and hopes that this report provides a foundation for further action to combat Islamophobia in all its forms.

## THE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP



The Honourable  
Salma Ataullahjan  
*Chair*



The Honourable Wanda  
Thomas Bernard  
*Deputy Chair*

### The Honourable Senators



David Arnot



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The Honourable Senator Yvonne Boyer  
The Honourable Senator Bev Busson  
The Honourable Senator Andrew Cardozo  
The Honourable Senator Jane Cordy  
The Honourable Senator Dennis Dawson (retired)  
The Honourable Senator Pat Duncan  
The Honourable Senator Leo Housakos  
The Honourable Senator Victor Oh  
The Honourable Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia  
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## ORDER OF REFERENCE

Extract from the *Journals of the Senate* of Thursday, March 3, 2022:

The Honourable Senator Ataullahjan moved, seconded by the Honourable Senator Wells:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, in accordance with rule 12- 7(14), be authorized to examine and report on such issues as may arise from time to time relating to human rights generally; and

That the committee submit its final report to the Senate no later than June 12, 2025.

The question being put on the motion, it was adopted.

*Interim Clerk of the Senate*

Gérald Lafrenière



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 29 January 2017, 46 people were attacked in the Great Mosque of Quebec during evening prayer. Six people were killed, five were seriously injured, and many others live with unimaginable trauma. Moreover, the psychological impacts of the Quebec mosque shooting continue to reverberate in Muslim communities across Canada.

Alarming, this tragedy was not an isolated incident. The Quebec mosque shooting has been followed by a series of other violent attacks against Muslim communities, including in Edmonton, Saskatoon, London, Mississauga and Toronto.

Muslims have been important contributors to Canadian society since before Confederation. Now representing 4.9% of the Canadian population,<sup>1</sup> Muslims continue to serve communities across Canada in countless ways. Despite their rich and varied contributions to Canadian society, Muslims are often unfairly vilified and marginalized.

The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (the committee) was disturbed to hear that incidents of Islamophobia are a daily reality for many Muslims, that one in four Canadians do not trust Muslims,<sup>2</sup> and that Canada leads the G7 in terms of targeted killings of Muslims motivated by Islamophobia.<sup>3</sup>

What is fueling the rise of Islamophobia, what are its effects, and how can we reverse these disturbing trends? These are the questions that prompted the committee to undertake its study on Islamophobia in Canada.

Evidence was gathered during site visits to Muslim communities in British Columbia (B.C.), Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, through written submissions, and in 21 public meetings featuring a wide range of experts and stakeholders. The committee heard from 138 witnesses during public meetings, as well as from many others who spoke to the committee informally during its visits to communities across the country.

The committee wishes to thank the many witnesses who shared their individual experiences of enduring Islamophobia, including incidents of physical violence, online harassment, bullying and discrimination. Their courage deserves recognition, and their experiences demand action.

In particular, the committee wishes to acknowledge the witnesses who recalled traumatic experiences. For example, in Edmonton, the committee heard powerful stories of Muslim women being physically and verbally assaulted, including at knifepoint. These stories were often difficult to

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, [The Canadian census: A rich portrait of the country's religious and ethnocultural diversity](#), 26 October 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Khetty, "[Final Submission to Senate Committee Islamophobia Study](#)", Brief submitted to the committee, 22 September 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Senate, Standing Committee on Human Rights [RIDR], [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Mustafa Farooq, Chief Executive Director, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

share, but they provided the committee with valuable insights into the complex ways in which Islamophobia combines with other forms of prejudice in Canadian society.

Islamophobia is a complex phenomenon that takes many forms. Canada’s anti-racism strategy 2019–2022 states that Islamophobia:

*Includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level.<sup>4</sup>*

This report includes 13 recommendations based on witness testimony, data, and calls to action from Muslim communities. While there is no single solution to the complex problem of Islamophobia, the committee’s recommendations are designed to ensure that Muslims are empowered to live, work, and pray in safety, on an equal basis with all Canadians. Following the committee’s recommendations, this report is divided into four major sections, which outline what the committee heard over the course of its study and provide further context for the committee’s recommendations.

The first section of the report outlines the intersectional nature of Islamophobia. The committee heard that Islamophobia combines with other forms of prejudice, such as sexism, racism, ableism and homophobia, resulting in experiences of discrimination that are at once unique and tragically predictable.

The second section discusses hate-motivated crimes and the role of law enforcement and federal institutions in addressing them. The horrific acts of violence targeting Muslims in recent years have left Muslim communities feeling like they are constantly under attack and that they are physically unsafe. More needs to be done to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks to protect Muslim communities.

The third section discusses the role of the media and misinformation in the spread of Islamophobia, as well as avenues to confront this phenomenon. The media and the Internet often amplify and perpetuate hateful attitudes, but also have enormous potential to change harmful narratives of discrimination and hate. Similarly, the education system presents both challenges and opportunities for confronting hatred and ignorance, as it reflects the society in which it exists, but can also help change it for future generations.

The final section of the report outlines issues of systemic discrimination. Too often, individual acts of hatred are compounded by systemic Islamophobia, which persists – intentionally or not – through laws, policies and practices in a range of areas, including national security, secularism, workplace discrimination and the federal correctional system. For example, the committee heard

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<sup>4</sup> Canadian Heritage, [Building a Foundation for Change: Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022](#). For a discussion of the committee’s choice of the term ‘Islamophobia’ in this report see [Appendix A: Terminology](#).

extensive evidence of Muslim charities being disproportionately scrutinized by the Canada Revenue Agency without evidence showing that Muslim charities presented any additional risk. The federal government needs to comprehensively examine and correct the prejudices embedded in these and other areas of law and policy.

In summary, Islamophobia is present in Canadian society and in many of our institutions. This is an uncomfortable fact for many Canadians, but one that must be confronted head on. This report highlights numerous personal experiences as well as evidence and expert perspectives presented to the committee, pointing to the need for urgent action to reverse the alarming trajectory of Islamophobia in Canada.

The committee urges the federal government and all elements of Canadian society to take concrete action in response to this report and its recommendations.

## List of Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada ensure that mandatory, regular training on Islamophobia and unconscious bias is in place for all employees throughout the federal government and its agencies, and that similar training is made available to the federal judiciary.

### Recommendation 2

That the Department of Canadian Heritage develop a multimedia campaign and educational resources on Islamophobia that can be incorporated into classroom activities for various age groups, as well as professional training within the federal public service.

### Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada provide additional funding to address hate-motivated crimes, including to:

- directly support affected individuals and communities;
- support the development of national police standards and training, including specialized training for dedicated hate crime units;
- provide more tools and resources to police forces to help them respond to hate crimes and hate-motivated incidents;
- introduce a federal hotline for reporting hate-motivated crimes in cooperation with all existing provincial versions, raise awareness of the hotline, collect and regularly publish data, and train operators to refer callers to a range of federal and local services; and
- enhance the Security Infrastructure Program, including by simplifying and providing additional support during the application process, considering a rebate-based system to ensure that communities have timely access to funding, and reducing the 50% cost-sharing requirement.

### Recommendation 4

That the Department of Justice undertake public consultations – with a particular focus on affected communities – and introduce amendments to create specific *Criminal Code* offences for hate-motivated crimes.

### **Recommendation 5**

That the Department of Canadian Heritage undertake a review of the role and effectiveness of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in fulfilling its mandate with respect to the broadcasting policy for Canada, particularly the requirement to reflect the needs, interests and aspirations of racialized communities.

### **Recommendation 6**

That the Department of Justice introduce legislation to provide a mechanism for human rights complaints relating to online hate similar to former section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to ensure that individuals have timely access to justice.

### **Recommendation 7**

That a parliamentary committee undertake a comprehensive review of Canada's national security framework, as required by the *National Security Act, 2017*, and that this review include a particular focus on how to ensure proactive and meaningful transparency, and take into account systemic Islamophobia.

### **Recommendation 8**

That the Department of Finance update the National Inherent Risk Assessment using the lens of intersectional Islamophobia.

### **Recommendation 9**

That the Government of Canada introduce legislation requiring the Canada Revenue Agency to collect and publish data on religious organizations subject to audits and revocations, and to analyze such data to develop a strategy to reduce bias.

### **Recommendation 10**

That the Minister of National Revenue review the mandate and functioning of the Review and Analysis Division of the Canada Revenue Agency, taking into account the conclusions of the pending review by the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency.

### **Recommendation 11**

That the Department of Justice introduce legislation to establish an independent civilian body to review decisions of the Canada Revenue Agency's Charities Directorate and provide timely decisions on appeals.

**Recommendation 12**

That the Department of Justice introduce legislation to modernize the *Employment Equity Act*, including to ensure that intersectionality and Islamophobia are taken into account.

**Recommendation 13**

That Statistics Canada further invest in the proactive collection and dissemination of disaggregated data to better enable decision makers to take intersectional Islamophobia into account.

## Understanding Intersectional Discrimination

Though Muslims share a monotheistic faith, they encompass a variety of identities and heritages.<sup>5</sup> As the following section explains, one aspect of Islamophobia is that it attempts to erase this diversity, combining and reducing Muslim identities into stereotypes.<sup>6</sup> This dehumanizing practice is not only harmful in itself; it also normalizes adverse actions against Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

Islamophobia's impact is further shaped by its intersection with other forms of discrimination. This intersectionality not only affects the way Islamophobia is experienced but can intensify the challenges faced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities. Some witnesses informed the committee that the impact of intersectional discrimination can often surpass the sum of its individual components.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, to effectively combat Islamophobia, it is important to acknowledge the experiences of Muslim individuals with intersecting identities, including those relating to gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Dr. Neila Miled, Anti-Racism Advisor, Faculty of Medicine of the University of British Columbia, Office of Respectful Environments, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Sarah Khetty, Director of Marketing, Zabiha Halal).

<sup>6</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Aryn B. Sajoo, Scholar-in-Residence and Lecturer, School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Dr. Arfeen Malick, Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Omar Mouallem, Author, Journalist and Filmmaker).

<sup>7</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Dr. Arfeen Malick, Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada).

<sup>8</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kasari Govender, British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Husein Panju, Chair, Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association).

<sup>9</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (El-Farouk Khaki, Co-Founder, founder of Salaam Queer Muslim Community, co-founder of The Canadian Muslim Union, co-founder of the Muslim AIDS Project, founding member of the Muslim Lawyers' Association, El-Tawhid Juma Circle).

## Gendered Islamophobia

The intersection of faith and gender, particularly for Muslim women, creates unique challenges and an escalation in discrimination and prejudice. Visible symbols of faith, such as the hijab, increase vulnerability to hate crimes, discrimination, and employment obstacles.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, these hardships can subsequently lead to substantial mental health issues.<sup>11</sup>

Kashif Ahmed (Board Chairman, National Council of Canadian Muslims) described gendered Islamophobia as the most common type of Islamophobia, with Muslim women as “primary targets when it comes to violence and intimidation.”<sup>12</sup> This aggression has led to attacks on Muslim women in various Canadian cities. As a result, Muslim women and girls, especially those recognizable by their attire, are often afraid to leave their homes for work, school, or even routine activities.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from physical violence, Muslim women also encounter Islamophobia in the form of microaggressions,<sup>14</sup> which include offensive language, threatening gestures, marginalization, and discrimination.<sup>15</sup> Witnesses told the committee that these forms of discrimination and abuse occur daily.<sup>16</sup> Fatima Coovadia (Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission) revealed that to cope with these experiences, Muslim women console themselves “by feeling grateful that it was just that and not worse.”<sup>17</sup>

The profound effects of gendered Islamophobia are such that it compels certain women to consider removing their hijabs to enhance their employment opportunities. Testimonies highlighted the fact that Islamophobia in the workplace is not merely the consequence of a handful of people's actions; rather, it is a systemic issue that is widespread. For example, Jad El Tal (Director

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<sup>10</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kashif Ahmed, Board Chairman, National Council of Canadian Muslims); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Rachna Singh, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Surrey-Green Timbers and Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Dr. Neila Miled, Anti-Racism Advisor, Faculty of Medicine of the University of British Columbia, Office of Respectful Environments, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Hasan Alam, Co-Founder and Community Liaison, Islamophobia Legal Assistance Hotline); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kasari Govender, British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner).

<sup>11</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Dunia Nur, President and CEO, African Canadian Civic Engagement Council); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Nasra Adem, Director at Black Art Matters, Poet, Artist and Queer Activist); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Wati Rahmat, Founder and Director, Sisters Dialogue); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Dr. Arfeen Malick, Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada).

<sup>12</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kashif Ahmed, Board Chairman, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>13</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2022 (Nuzhat Jafri, Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women).

<sup>14</sup> Microaggressions are small acts of hostility or negativity related to factors such as race or cultural identity that create a sense of exclusion, often without malicious intent. See Government of Canada, “[Recognizing and Overcoming Biases and Microaggressions in the Workplace](#)”.

<sup>15</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2022 (Ali Abukar, Chief Executive Officer, Saskatoon Open Door Society).

<sup>16</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Reyhana Patel, Director of Communications and Government Relations, Islamic Relief Canada).

<sup>17</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Fatima Coovadia, Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission).



of Research and Policy, Canadian Arab Institute) informed the committee that Arab women in Canada suffer from the highest unemployment rate compared to any other demographic group.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, while most witnesses spoke of gendered Islamophobia in relation to women, it also affects men in different contexts. For example, in the context of immigration, Western stereotypes associating Muslim men with security issues have resulted in their disproportionate detention, reinforcing presumptions that they pose security risks.<sup>19</sup>

## Race and Ethnicity, Disability and Sexual Orientation

The significance of recognizing intersectional discrimination extends beyond faith and gender. Witnesses also addressed the disparate impact of Islamophobia in the context of race, disability, and sexual orientation.

Recent attacks on Black Muslim women in Edmonton and other Canadian cities illustrate the role that race plays within Islamophobia. In addition to being victims of attacks, Dunia Nur (President and CEO, African Canadian Civic Engagement Council) emphasized the challenges Black Muslim women face when reporting such incidents. Ms. Nur explained that when she, her family, or women from her community report incidents to the Edmonton police, they are typically dismissed. She added, “We have reached out to every single layer in every single layer of government. We’ve received no response from anybody.”<sup>20</sup>

These experiences are compounded by the sense of exclusion and marginalization within their own communities. Ms. Nur explained that Black Muslim women “face complex experiences, trying to balance solidarity with fellow Muslims while also addressing anti-Black racism and gender-based violence within the Muslim community.”<sup>21</sup>

For some Muslims, religion intersects with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression, creating additional challenges that affect physical and mental wellbeing, as well as personal safety. El-Farouk Khaki (El-Tawhid Juma Circle) emphasized that while discrimination, harassment, and threats are pervasive experiences for many Muslims in Canada, queer, trans, and other “non-conforming” Muslims are particularly susceptible to harm and lack adequate protection.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 22 September 2022 (Jad El Tal, Director of Research and Policy, Canadian Arab Institute). Jad El Tal referred to a report showing that as of 2022, Arab women in Canada had the lowest employment rate, at just 68.1%. See Canadian Arab Institute, *Employment Barriers Facing Arab Women in Canada*, April 2022.

<sup>19</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Amy B. Sajoo, Scholar-in-Residence and Lecturer, School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University); Catherine Dauvergne (2020), “[Gendering Islamophobia to better understand immigration laws](#)”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46:12, 2569-2584, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1561066.

<sup>20</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Dunia Nur, President and CEO, African Canadian Civic Engagement Council).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 22 September 2022 (El-Farouk Khaki, Co-Founder, founder of Salaam Queer Muslim Community, co-founder of The Canadian Muslim Union, co-founder of the Muslim AIDS Project, founding member of the Muslim Lawyers’ Association, El-Tawhid Juma Circle).

The challenges of intersectional discrimination are not solely related to the discrimination encountered, but also to the absence of support networks available for those impacted by it. El-Farouk Khaki highlighted that some people tend to normalize discriminatory behaviours instead of reporting them, particularly queer and trans Muslims who may not know where to seek help. He explained that these individuals struggle to find someone who can understand the intricate details of their experiences. In his words: “Who do you go to that’s going to understand the fullness of your experience as Muslims, as queers or trans people and as racialized people? There’s no one to report to, no safe place to report where you will be held in your entirety.”<sup>23</sup>

Finally, witnesses also noted that Islamophobia and ableism intersect to create unique challenges for Muslims with disabilities, who face discrimination based on both their religion and their physical or mental abilities. Such discrimination can take various forms and may even be encountered in spaces intended for care.<sup>24</sup>



The President of the Canadian Muslim Forum, Samer Majzoub, left, speaks with Senators Victor Oh, centre, and Salma Ataullahjan, right, at a public hearing in Quebec City.

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<sup>23</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 22 September 2022 (El-Farouk Khaki, Co-Founder, founder of Salaam Queer Muslim Community, co-founder of The Canadian Muslim Union, co-founder of the Muslim AIDS Project, founding member of the Muslim Lawyers’ Association, El-Tawhid Juma Circle).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.; RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Nasra Adem, Director at Black Art Matters, Poet, Artist and Queer Activist); RIDR, *Evidence*, 6 March 2023 (Rabia Khedr, Chief Executive Officer of DEEN Support Services and Board Member, Federation of Muslim Women).

The significance of collecting and analyzing all intersectional data was emphasized by witnesses as it enables a comprehensive understanding of complex issues and avoids reinforcing discriminatory norms. Kasari Govender (British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner) suggested that data collection should not prioritize anti-racism initiatives over other forms of discrimination and should allow for intersectional data to be produced. She emphasized the importance of collecting, storing and using data in a way that allows for cross tabulation, so that intersections can be revealed and analyzed. Failure to proactively develop disaggregated demographic data processes that apply intersectional lenses, she explained, risks “reinforcing a male or a white norm of able-bodied form of discrimination, which can be really problematic.”<sup>25</sup>

Regarding the collection of data on hate crimes, Barbara Perry (Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University) highlighted that law enforcement has faced challenges in accurately representing the small proportion of hate crimes that come to their attention. She mentioned that some law enforcement officials recognize that a racialized Muslim woman may be victimized not only because she is Muslim but also because she is a Muslim woman and racialized. She added that a recent change in how law enforcement data is collected will now allow law enforcement to identify multiple motivations, which will enable a better understanding of the complexities associated with many forms of hate crime where gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability are often issues. She stated that, overall, this is an important step forward in understanding hate crimes.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Kasari Govender, British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner).

<sup>26</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023 (Barbara Perry, Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University).

## Responding to Hate-Motivated Crimes

Islamophobia can manifest in a variety of criminal behaviours, including threats and acts of violence. These crimes have broad repercussions in communities. Over the course of its study, the committee heard directly from survivors of violent Islamophobia, as well as from countless others who have been psychologically affected by threats and attacks on their communities. This section presents some of their stories and recommendations.

### Recent Incidents

In recent years, violent Islamophobia has reached a disturbing and unprecedented level in Canada, with the Quebec City mosque attack, the London attack on a Muslim family, and the attack at Toronto's International Muslim Organization mosque claiming the lives of Ibrahima Barry, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Abdelkrim Hassane, Azzedine Soufiane, Mohamed-Aslim Zafis, Yumna Afzaal, Madiha Salman, Salman Afzaal, and Talat Afzaal.<sup>27</sup> Several witnesses noted that Canada now leads the G7 in terms of targeted killings of Muslims motivated by Islamophobia.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the threat of violent Islamophobia looms over Muslim communities across Canada. In Mississauga, an attacker recently brandished an axe at a mosque until he was subdued by its members.<sup>29</sup> In Edmonton, the committee heard about women being thrown to the ground and threatened at knifepoint,<sup>30</sup> having hot coffee poured over them,<sup>31</sup> and having eggs thrown at them in the street.<sup>32</sup> In Saskatoon, an elderly man was nearly run over by a pickup truck, and later had a brick thrown through his window,<sup>33</sup> while another man was recently attacked with a knife, verbally assaulted, and had his beard cut off.<sup>34</sup>

Karim Elabed (Imam of Mosquée de Lévis, Association des musulmanes et musulmans du Grand Lévis) described several threats he has received in Quebec, including from the far-right group La Meute telling him to close his business, as well as drawings of swastikas and the placement of a pig's head at his mosque.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Abdal Khan (President, Moncton Muslim Association) described an intoxicated man yelling obscenities and hateful words against Muslims at a mosque in

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<sup>27</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Said Omar, Alberta Advocacy Officer, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>28</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 June 2022 (Mohammed Hashim, Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Said Omar, Alberta Advocacy Officer, National Council of Canadian Muslims); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Shabnees Siwjee, At-Large Director, Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of Toronto).

<sup>29</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 June 2022 (Jasmin Zine, Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University)

<sup>30</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Said Omar, Alberta Advocacy Officer, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>31</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Jibril Ibrahim, Chairperson, Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Fatima Coovadia, Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission).

<sup>34</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2022 (Ali Abukar, Chief Executive Officer, Saskatoon Open Door Society).

<sup>35</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 March 2023 (Karim Elabed, Imam of Mosquée de Lévis, Association des musulmanes et musulmans du Grand Lévis).

Moncton during Ramadan.<sup>36</sup> These incidents are not uncommon, and illustrate both the geographical range and the spectrum of hateful behaviours that constitute Islamophobia in Canada. For many Muslims, fear of violence is a daily reality.

While many incidents of Islamophobia are not reported to the police, data on hate-motivated crimes confirm that Islamophobia is widespread. In 2021, there were 144 hate-motivated crimes reported to police across Canada in which the primary motivation was anti-Muslim hatred. An additional 1,723 crimes were motivated by racial or ethnic hatred.<sup>37</sup> Barbara Perry (Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University) noted that many crimes motivated by racial or ethnic hatred should be understood as incidents of Islamophobia. Professor Perry explained that approximately 88% of Muslims are also members of visible minority communities, and that police were until recently limited to recording only one motivation – such as either race or religion – when recording hate crimes.<sup>38</sup> Professor Perry stated that allowing police to record multiple motivations will enable researchers to better understand crimes motivated by various intersecting factors such as religion, race and gender.<sup>39</sup>

Despite this improvement, police-reported data still do not provide a complete picture of hate-motivated violence against Muslims in Canada. In 2019 alone, approximately 223,000 Canadians said they were victims of hate-motivated crimes.<sup>40</sup> As explained by Mohammed Hashim (Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation), “only 1% of those numbers are captured in the police-reported hate crime stats. Charges are laid in only a fraction of those, and convictions are even fewer. Communities have felt let down and unprotected.”<sup>41</sup>

## Individual and Community Trauma

Muslims in Canada feel like they are under attack. The psychological impact of constant fear and vigilance is a heavy burden. Survivors of violent Islamophobia live with the trauma of their direct experience, while countless others live with vicarious trauma brought on by justified fear that their communities are not safe.

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<sup>36</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 3 October 2022 (Abdal Khan, President, Moncton Muslim Association).

<sup>37</sup> Statistics Canada, “[A comprehensive portrait of police-reported crime in Canada, 2021](#)”, *The Daily*, 2 August 2022.

<sup>38</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023 (Barbara Perry, Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Jing Hui Wang and Greg Moreau, [Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2020](#), Statistics Canada, 17 March 2022.

<sup>41</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 June 2022 (Mohammed Hashim, Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation).

Mohamad El Hafid, a survivor of the 2017 mosque shooting in Quebec, explained the lasting impact of the attack:

*Everything in my life has changed. I am hypervigilant everywhere I go...*

*The mosque, which, for me, used to be a place of peaceful contemplation, physical tranquility and healing of the heart, no longer exists. Every time I enter a mosque, I'm on guard and stressed, monitoring the faithful as they enter and leave. Perhaps, who knows, someone, an intruder, may fire on us. It's an enormous and unbearable stress.<sup>42</sup>*

Violent attacks such as these have far-reaching repercussions across Canada. Professor Lazreg described being afraid to go to his own mosque in the days that followed the Quebec shooting, and that when he did go, he had a reflex of looking over his shoulder, haunted by the idea that simply praying with people of his faith could become deadly.<sup>43</sup>

Arfeen Malick (Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada) explained the causes and consequences of psychological distress associated with Islamophobia. Acts of targeted violence, combined with disproportionate scrutiny, surveillance and microaggressions can lead to justified paranoia, prolonged trauma-related anxiety and depressive symptoms.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Dr. Malick explained that "Islamophobia is different than other forms of discrimination because it targets the very coping tools that we know are important to allow a community and individual to thrive and heal in the face of adversity."<sup>45</sup> Dr. Malick cited the example of Ejaz Choudry, a 62-year-old man with schizophrenia who was shot dead by police during a mental health check. Incidents such as these prompt some Muslims to delay seeking mental health care, or to seek it from underqualified individuals, worsening mental health outcomes in Muslim communities.<sup>46</sup> Javeed Sukhera (Chief of Psychiatry, Hartford Hospital) similarly spoke about the importance of addressing discriminatory behaviour in the health care system in order to build trust with Muslim communities.<sup>47</sup>

The committee was particularly concerned to hear about the effects of trauma on children. Dr. Sukhera emphasized the psychological effects of Islamophobia in the digital age, noting that bullying and hateful messages follow children everywhere they go.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, Neila Miled noted that in her study of the experiences of Muslim high school students, all of the children encountered

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<sup>42</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Mohamad El Hafid).

<sup>43</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Houssem Ben Lazreg, Professor of modern languages and cultural studies, University of Alberta).

<sup>44</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Dr. Arfeen Malick, Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2022 (Dr. Javeed Sukhera, Chief of Psychiatry, Hartford Hospital).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



hate on a daily basis. One student described how her veil makes people look at her in a strange way, and that her mother was once attacked. Another stated: “I was born here. English is my first language, but I never felt I belong here. I was always attacked and asked to go home. Where is home? I have no other place to go to.”<sup>49</sup>

Rizwana Kaderdina (Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario) described how students are fearful of being perceived as Muslim, particularly in the aftermath of the attack in London, Ontario, and that some students continue to feel unsafe in school prayer spaces:

*Sometimes Muslim students choose not to use school prayer spaces because it’s too risky. They talk about “the Muslim kids” “being watched” by teachers and about peers asking them if “that room” is where they practise making bombs. These are not isolated incidents. Muslim students have shared that it is normal to be called a terrorist and that they consistently encounter Islamophobia, often in the form of “jokes.” And they talk about how there’s no point in reporting Islamophobic interactions because that’s just how it is for us and everyone else thinks it’s funny and their belief that no one will do anything anyway.<sup>50</sup>*

During committee travel to Clarkson Secondary School in Mississauga, the committee heard directly from students about their personal experiences with Islamophobia. Several students said that they had been called a terrorist, with some saying that it happens a lot. One boy stated that when other students make Islamophobic jokes he laughs along, but that inside he feels really hurt. The committee heard that teachers can also be insensitive to Muslim students, with one girl recounting a class discussion about terrorism in which she felt like the spotlight was on her. However, other students spoke very positively about the staff and the availability of religious accommodations at the school, noting in particular that having so many Muslim teachers has been very meaningful to them.

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<sup>49</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Dr. Neila Miled, Anti-Racism Advisor, Faculty of Medicine of the University of British Columbia, Office of Respectful Environments, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion).

<sup>50</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Rizwana Kaderdina, Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario).



Senators Salma Ataullahjan, David M. Arnot, Amina Gerba and Victor Oh visit Clarkson Secondary School in Mississauga, Ontario.

The committee was particularly disturbed to hear examples of Muslim children being targeted by adults. During a site visit to the ISNA mosque in Mississauga, the committee heard about an incident in which several people stopped their cars to yell and swear at a group of Syrian refugee children who were walking to a soccer field. Not understanding the language, the children asked why these adults were so mad at them. The volunteer accompanying the children recounted the difficulty of choosing what to tell them to try to mitigate the trauma of this experience.

Several witnesses described the intergenerational nature of Islamophobia, including the toll of Islamophobia on parents, children, and grandchildren.<sup>51</sup> Fatima Coovadia, a Commissioner at the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, described a harrowing incident in which she and her mother were threatened and followed in their car after stopping at a drive-through. On the advice of a 911 dispatcher, she drove with her mother for 15 minutes while being pursued by the other car, all the while struggling to remain calm and drive safely. She described the internal struggle of

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<sup>51</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Shahina Siddiqui, Co-Founder and Volunteer Executive Director, Islamic Social Services Association); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Farha Shariff, Senior Advisor for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization, on behalf of the Dean's office, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Fatima Coovadia, Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission).



deciding whether to share this experience with others, stating that “it’s really difficult as a mom to need to have those conversations.”<sup>52</sup>

Nabila Daoudi recounted an incident at a grocery store in which she was insulted and threatened in front of her three children, noting that similar incidents happen frequently “on the bus, on the street, in my car, in grocery stores, everywhere.”<sup>53</sup>

During committee travel to Edmonton, Farha Shariff (Senior Advisor for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta) described the fear and trauma that comes from being the target of Islamophobia, noting that her parents, husband, and three daughters have also been targeted. She also explained that the very act of testifying to the committee was intimidating, stating that:

*I cannot express to you the psychological harm that comes with having to live your life in fear. I almost said no to this invitation because of fear of what would happen should I speak my academic and personal lived truth. I had concerns about where I would park, how I would walk to this hotel, and I am not a visible target other than my skin colour. I have chosen not to wear hijab, so that adds a further layer of representation for women. And I have the privilege of education. I have the privilege of having a position at the university where I can speak my truth and speak the truth for other women as well. Not all women have that privilege.*<sup>54</sup>

The committee is aware that other potential witnesses were afraid to testify as part of this study, highlighting the fact that the psychological impact of Islamophobia can limit our understanding of the problem itself. The committee is concerned that those who were unable to share their perspectives may have been equally reticent to report incidents to police or other institutional actors.

## The Role of Law Enforcement and Federal Institutions in Responding to Hate-Motivated Crimes

### Legal Framework

The *Criminal Code* (the Code) includes several specific offences that deal with hate-motivated crimes. For example, it is an offence under section 430(4.1) of the Code to cause mischief to specific types of property – such as buildings used for religious worship – where the mischief is

<sup>52</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023 (Fatima Coovadia, Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission).

<sup>53</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 September 2022 (Nabila Daoudi, as an individual).

<sup>54</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Farha Shariff, Senior Advisor for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization, on behalf of the Dean’s office, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta).

“motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or mental or physical disability.”

Similarly, sections 318, 319(1) and 319(2) of the Code set out specific offences relating to advocating genocide, publicly inciting hatred against an identifiable group or willfully promoting hatred.

In addition to these specific provisions, hate-motivated crimes are dealt with more broadly through principles of sentencing. Being motivated by hatred towards groups based on factors such as race and religion can be considered an aggravating factor under section 718.2(a)(i) of the Code. This means that a person charged with any crime under the Code will face the possibility of an increased sentence if their crime was motivated by such hatred.

Nevertheless, some witnesses criticized the lack of free-standing provisions in the Code to specifically address circumstances in which crimes such as assault, murder, and threats are motivated by hatred against one’s identity.<sup>55</sup> Other witnesses emphasized that existing offences relating to hate-motivated crimes need to be better enforced.<sup>56</sup>

## Public Safety Canada Programs

The federal government has a range of programs that seek to address issues relating to hate crimes, including the Community Resilience Fund and the Security Infrastructure Program, both of which are administered by Public Safety Canada.

The Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence (Public Safety Canada) administers the Community Resilience Fund, which provides funding to organizations that are working to better understand, prevent and counter violent extremism.<sup>57</sup> The Centre also works with national and international partners to develop and share research on effective prevention practices.<sup>58</sup>

Robert Burley (Senior Director, Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence, Public Safety Canada) noted that although the Community Resilience Fund supports projects and research aimed at the full range of issues associated with ideologically motivated violent extremism, it does not have projects specifically aimed at Islamophobia.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Jibril Ibrahim, Chairperson, Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton).

<sup>56</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023 (Barbara Perry, Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University); RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Monia Mazigh, Author, Human Rights Activist and Adjunct Research Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Carleton University).

<sup>57</sup> Public Safety Canada, “[Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence](#)”.

<sup>58</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 13 June 2022 (Dominic Rochon, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, National Security and Cyber Security Branch, Public Safety Canada).

<sup>59</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 13 June 2022 (Robert Burley, Senior Director, Canada Centre for Community Engagement & Prevention of Violence, Public Safety Canada).

Public Safety Canada also oversees the Security Infrastructure Program, which provides funding for security improvements in places of worship, private educational institutions and community centres that are considered at risk of being victimized by hate-motivated crimes. Approved projects may receive funding for up to 50% of total project costs, up to a maximum of \$100,000 per project.<sup>60</sup>

In a written response submitted to the committee, Public Safety Canada provided further information on the Security Infrastructure Program, stating that it has provided more than \$11 million since 2011 to support 430 projects across Canada, 127 of which were Muslim. These have included mosques, community centres and other gathering spaces. In addition, 30% of the proposals recommended for funding during the 2021 application cycle were from Muslim organizations.<sup>61</sup>

While witnesses broadly supported federal funding to improve security infrastructure in mosques, several witnesses expressed serious concerns about the scope and implementation of the Security Infrastructure Program. For example, Mustafa Farooq (Chief Executive Director, National Council of Canadian Muslims) emphasized the shortcomings of the Security Infrastructure Program, describing it as slow, non-retroactive, bureaucratic, and challenging to navigate. Moreover, he cited several examples of mosques that have been the target of acts of hate, but have not yet received funding for security upgrades.<sup>62</sup>

During a site visit to the Quebec City mosque, the committee heard that federal support for security upgrades in the wake of the 2017 shooting represented only a small fraction of the overall cost. For example, the installation of two emergency exits alone cost more than the entire federal contribution. Moreover, the committee heard that the application process was complex, and that little support was provided by public servants to help them navigate this process.

Mohamed Labidi (President, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City) provided further detail, stating that:

*The cost to secure our premises has amounted to more than \$50,000, just to purchase surveillance cameras and screens and to install a door opening system. That has cost more than \$50,000. There's also the cost to demolish and relocate the wall and install a concrete wall. That has cost us more than \$2 million. I remind you that we have received only \$17,000 in assistance from the federal government.<sup>63</sup>*

The committee is deeply concerned that federal funding for security upgrades is inadequate and slow to be delivered even at a site where six people were murdered.

<sup>60</sup> Public Safety Canada, "[Communities at Risk: Security Infrastructure Program \(SIP\)](#)".

<sup>61</sup> Public Safety Canada, "Response to Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights," 8 September 2022.

<sup>62</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Mustafa Farooq, Chief Executive Director, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>63</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Mohamed Labidi, President, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City).

Public Safety Canada acknowledged these challenges, highlighting that recent consultations have raised concerns regarding “a complex and lengthy application process, a lack of responsiveness to emergencies, barriers to participation due to the 50% cost-sharing requirement and an absence of community partnership components.”<sup>64</sup> Chad Westmacott (Director General, Community Safety, Corrections and Criminal Justice, Public Safety Canada) noted that Public Safety Canada is currently working to improve the Security Infrastructure Program, including increasing accessibility to funding and training, and considering ways to enhance community interaction.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Budget 2023 committed approximately \$49.4 million to enhance the Security Infrastructure Program.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, witnesses spoke about the need for additional programs, such as a national hotline to facilitate the reporting of hate crimes and direct callers to appropriate resources.<sup>67</sup> Hasan Alam (Co-Founder and Community Liaison, Islamophobia Legal Assistance Hotline) spoke about his experience in B.C. creating a hotline that provides legal assistance in multiple languages to individuals who have been impacted by Islamophobia. He noted that the legal issues dealt with through the hotline are diverse, with 68% relating to discrimination, 28% involving harassment, and 4% stemming from a physical assault.<sup>68</sup> These statistics highlight the need for services that are flexible and have the capacity to direct people to a broad range of services.

## The Role of Law Enforcement

Responding to hate-motivated crimes is primarily the responsibility of local police of jurisdiction. As a result, there is no uniform approach among police forces in Canada. However, representatives from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) explained that in the context of ideologically motivated violent extremism, there is often overlapping jurisdiction between local police and the RCMP’s national security section. This includes both the investigation of offences and engagement with local communities.<sup>69</sup>

Efforts to combat ideologically motivated violent extremism have historically targeted Muslims disproportionately. Although the focus of these efforts is beginning to appropriately shift to a wider range of actors, including extreme xenophobic and white supremacist groups,<sup>70</sup> communities that have been subjected to undue police surveillance and suspicion remain distrustful of law enforcement. As acknowledged by Peter Flegel (Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism

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<sup>64</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Chad Westmacott, Director General, Community Safety, Corrections and Criminal Justice, Public Safety Canada).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage, “[Follow-up from the appearance of the Officials from PCH Officials before the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights](#)”, 20 April 2023.

<sup>67</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Samira Laouni, President – Director of C.O.R. and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week).

<sup>68</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Hasan Alam, Co-Founder and Community Liaison, Islamophobia Legal Assistance Hotline).

<sup>69</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Mark Flynn, Assistant Commissioner, Federal Policing, National Security and Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

<sup>70</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 13 June 2022 (Dominic Rochon, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, National Security and Cyber Security Branch, Public Safety Canada).

Secretariat, Canadian Heritage), this distrust presents an additional barrier for Muslim communities seeking to report hate crimes and obtain recourse, particularly in light of concerns that police forces are sympathetic to white supremacist ideologies or have been infiltrated by groups espousing these views.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, Professor Perry noted that surveys of police officers indicate the persistence of racism and a reluctance to take hate-motivated crimes seriously. Many officers – both young and old – view hate-motivated crimes as a distraction or a political issue, rather than a serious law enforcement responsibility.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Professor Perry highlighted the lack of consistent training across police forces, noting that many do not have dedicated hate crime units, and that in some cases there is not even one individual officer with appropriate training.<sup>73</sup>

The lack of appropriate and consistent training with respect to hate-motivated crimes has significant consequences. Several witnesses recounted incidents in which police were dismissive or lacked appropriate concern for their safety. For example, after being threatened while in line at a grocery store, Nabila Daoudi insisted on filing a complaint with police. The police reportedly did not let her do so until after 45 minutes of argument, and then took no further action to investigate the offence. Instead, she stated that she is required to appear before a judge and pay for a report, simply because she asked the police to defend her.<sup>74</sup>

In March 2022, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and the RCMP launched a national task force on hate crimes. With representatives from various police forces and other stakeholders, the task force aims to develop national police standards for the investigation of hate-motivated crimes, improve intake practices for victims who report, establish a network of investigators with appropriate expertise, and launch an information hub to improve public understanding.<sup>75</sup>

The committee welcomes these efforts, while noting that many related recommendations from Muslim communities remain unaddressed. Several witnesses emphasized the importance of reiterating and following through on the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)'s 61 recommendations put forward during the 2021 National Summit on Islamophobia, which had broad community support.<sup>76</sup>

The federal government committed to taking immediate action on just six recommendations, based on the 35 that were directed at the federal government, and it has made some progress through actions such as the appointment of the Special Representative on Combatting

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<sup>71</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage).

<sup>72</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Barbara Perry, Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Nabila Daoudi).

<sup>75</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 June 2022 (Mohammed Hashim, Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation).

<sup>76</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Mustafa Farooq, Chief Executive Director, National Council of Canadian Muslims); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Shaykh Yusuf Badat, Imam, Islamic Foundation of Toronto); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Shabnees Siwjee, At-Large Director, Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat of Toronto); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Fatima Coovadia, Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Leigh Naturkach, Executive Director, Mosaic Institute).



Islamophobia and providing additional funding for the Security Infrastructure Program. However, some of the federal government’s commitments – such as a renewed Anti-Racism Strategy – have yet to yield concrete results more than two years later.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the committee believes that additional recommendations bear serious consideration and meaningful action. To that end, the committee urges the federal government to respond promptly to the recommendations set out in this report.



Senator David M. Arnot speaks with students during a visit to Clarkson Secondary School in Mississauga.

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<sup>77</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage, [“Follow-up from the appearance of the Officials from PCH Officials before the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights”](#), 20 April 2023.

## Confronting Stereotypes and Misinformation

Islamophobia is rooted in stereotypes and misinformation, often stemming from the mischaracterization of concepts like sharia, jihad, and hijab. It is also fueled by the practice of attributing the negative actions of a few Muslims to the broader community.<sup>78</sup> The recurring portrayal of Muslims in media has entrenched these stereotypes, leading them to become falsely accepted as truth.<sup>79</sup> Addressing these damaging misconceptions and stereotypes is crucial.

Jasmin Zine (Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University) argued that the media's influence on public perception of the Muslim community has paved the way for the rise of Islamophobia as an organized industry comprised of individuals and groups who share political and ideological goals of demonizing and vilifying Islam and Muslims. This has resulted in the spread of Islamophobic narratives and conspiracy theories. Professor Zine explained:

*When I speak about the Islamophobia industry, I'm talking about a grouping or a network that is comprised of far-right media outlets and Islamophobia influencers, White nationalist groups, far-right groups, soft-power fringe right groups, Muslim dissidents, think tanks and their designated security experts, and the donors who fund those campaigns. These otherwise diverse individuals and groups have shared political and ideological goals that involve the demonization and vilification of Islam and Muslims, and often work in concert to foment controversies and spread Islamophobic narratives and conspiracy theories.<sup>80</sup>*

She added that research on the Islamophobia industry in the United States has revealed that Islamophobic hate is financially incentivized and that around \$1.5 billion is circulated to 39 organizations dedicated to spreading anti-Muslim propaganda and disinformation campaigns. According to Professor Zine, the funding also supports groups in Canada "whose goal is to orchestrate controversies and promote conspiracy theories about Muslims as a demographic, cultural, security and civilizational threat."<sup>81</sup>

## The Role of Traditional Media

Several witnesses highlighted the role of traditional media in perpetuating negative stereotypes about Muslims, pointing out the media's overwhelming tendency to cover Muslims negatively. This

<sup>78</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2022 (Ali Lakhani, Editor, Sacred Web).

<sup>79</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Karim H. Karim, Chancellor's Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University).

<sup>80</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Jasmin Zine, Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

tendency, prevalent in both American and Canadian media, contributes to a skewed perception of Islam and Muslims.<sup>82</sup> Witnesses also noted a general hesitance among journalists to engage deeply with Islam and religious subjects, often leaving them ill-equipped to cover related stories accurately.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, witnesses highlighted the risk of profit-driven motives in the media sector, which can inadvertently promote harmful portrayals of Muslims, fueled by consumer preferences for sensationalized content.<sup>84</sup>

Tariq Tyab (Co-Founder, Foundation For A Path Forward) drew the committee’s attention to the negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims in traditional media and the skewed coverage of attacks involving Muslim perpetrators. Referring to research conducted by Toronto-based 416Labs, he noted that *The New York Times* has depicted Islam and Muslims “more negatively than cancer, cocaine, and alcohol.”<sup>85</sup> The study discovered that between 1990 and 2014, *The New York Times* associated Islam and Muslims with negative terms in headlines at least 57% of the time, whereas only 8% of news headlines about Islam and Muslims during the same period were positive. Tariq Tyab also shared the results of a 2017 study from the University of Georgia, which found that attacks by Muslim perpetrators in the United States received on average 449% more coverage in American media than other attacks. Additionally, he highlighted that the 2017 Quebec Mosque shooting received six times less coverage in American media than the Parliament Hill attack by Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, a convert to Islam, despite the mosque shooting involving six times more deaths.<sup>86</sup>

Tariq Tyab's observations also apply to Canada, where media representations of Islam and Muslims have been similarly distorted. He noted that terms related to the Quebec mosque shooting on the websites of the *CBC*, *The Globe and Mail*, and the *Toronto Star* yielded 194 relevant results. In contrast, terms related to the Boston Marathon bombing totaled 768, even though the Quebec mosque shooting occurred in Canada and included more fatalities.<sup>87</sup>

In their communication to the committee, CBC/Radio-Canada addressed their measures to combat Islamophobia in media content. They outlined the role of their independent ombudsmen in investigating complaints, including those specifically related to Islamophobia, and their adherence to Journalistic Standards and Practices.<sup>88</sup> They stated that these guidelines encourage the responsible handling of personal characteristics and criminal matters to prevent fostering prejudice or stereotyping.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Canadian news media councils, like the National NewsMedia Council

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<sup>82</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Tariq Tyab, Co-Founder, Foundation For A Path Forward). Referring to research conducted by Toronto-based 416Labs, he noted that *The New York Times* has depicted Islam and Muslims “more negatively than cancer, cocaine, and alcohol.”

<sup>83</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Karim H. Karim, Chancellor’s Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University).

<sup>84</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Hasan Alam, Co-Founder and Community Liaison, Islamophobia Legal Assistance Hotline).

<sup>85</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Tariq Tyab, Co-Founder, Foundation For A Path Forward).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> CBC Radio Canada, [Journalistic Standards and Practices](#).

<sup>89</sup> CBC Radio Canada, [Brief submitted to the committee by Shaun Poulter](#), 2 March 2023.



(NNC) and the Conseil de presse du Québec, communicated their role in managing potential breaches of journalism standards and educating the public, including about issues related to Islamophobia.<sup>90</sup> Pierre-Paul Noreau (President, Conseil de presse du Québec) acknowledged that the council has limited resources to inform people about their right to file a complaint, and suggested that additional resources could raise awareness and educate people about the existence of self-regulatory press councils.<sup>91</sup>

Hasan Alam emphasized the importance of genuine Muslim representation in media by citing the Disney series "Ms. Marvel." He explained that the show's portrayal of its main character, a young Muslim Pakistani woman, is nuanced and non-stereotypical, capturing the complexity of the Muslim community and faith. Mr. Alam noted the positive influence this representation had on his three nieces and stressed the far-reaching effects and significance of such authentic portrayals.<sup>92</sup>

Amira Elghawaby also spoke about initiatives to promote Muslim representation in media, highlighting in particular special programming conducted by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation in partnership with the National Film Board and Telefilm Canada, which "invited Muslim artists to talk about the way that Muslims have been dehumanized in our media, and that includes the gendered aspect of the dehumanization of Muslim women as victims, as requiring saving, et cetera."<sup>93</sup>

## The Role of Social Media and the Internet

Ultimately, the rise of hate-based discrimination in Canada has been facilitated by both mainstream and extremist social media platforms, through which thousands of extremist channels, pages and groups have been formed.<sup>94</sup> Rod Loyola (Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Poet, and Spoken Word Artist) stated that there are more than 3,000 hate websites or social media groups in Canada. He emphasized that the individuals behind these sites and groups are actively spreading and promoting hate.<sup>95</sup> The Canadian Human Rights Commission noted that the man who killed six people in the 2017 Québec City mosque shooting, "was inspired

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<sup>90</sup> National NewsMedia Council, "[Islamophobia in Canada study](#)", Brief submitted to the committee by John Fraser, 9 March 2023; RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 March 2023 (Pierre-Paul Noreau, President, Conseil de presse du Québec); See also National NewsMedia Council, [Journalistic best practices: Addressing racism and systemic racism](#), April 2021 and [Guide de déontologie journalistique du Conseil de presse du Québec](#), Le Conseil de presse du Québec, 2015.

<sup>91</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 March 2023 (Pierre-Paul Noreau, President, Conseil de presse du Québec).

<sup>92</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Hasan Alam, Co-Founder and Community Liaison, Islamophobia Legal Assistance Hotline).

<sup>93</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 June 2022 (Amira Elghawaby, Director of Strategic Communications and Campaigns, Canadian Race Relations Foundation).

<sup>94</sup> Jacob Davey, Mackenzie Hart and Cécile Guerin, [An Online Environmental Scan of Right-wing Extremism in Canada](#), Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2020, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Rod Loyola, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Poet, and Spoken Word Artist).

and emboldened by hateful rhetoric he found online. What he saw and read gave him the validation and encouragement he needed to pull the trigger.”<sup>96</sup>

Yasmin Jiwani (Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University) highlighted research showing that on topical issues, racist commentators can dominate the conversation by posting messages that reflect their opinions. These messages then increase in number and aggregate. She explained that to counter this, “it is imperative to cut down on the avenues available to post such comments.”<sup>97</sup> Additionally, she emphasized that media literacy is necessary to avoid falling into “internet rabbit holes” that promote misogyny, Islamophobia, and racism.<sup>98</sup>

She pointed out that the challenges of regulating hate speech on social media platforms is compounded by the fact that each platform has its own rules and regulations. While some have robust monitoring systems to address hate speech, others lack a uniform approach, making it easier for hate speech to go unchecked. She also noted that while some media platforms require users to sign in and register in order to leave comments, many do not, allowing individuals to post hateful comments without accountability.<sup>99</sup>

For Samira Laouni, the severity, meanness and number of hateful comments online can make one “wonder if it’s really a human being treating another human being in that way.”<sup>100</sup> Indeed, at times it is not. In a brief to the committee, Foundation For A Path Forward highlighted that online extremist narratives are often the result of foreign actors running “troll farms.”<sup>101</sup> These troll farms use deliberately misleading or provocative content on social media platforms to influence public opinion and sow discord.<sup>102</sup>

The frequency of hate speech and misinformation on social media platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram was a common concern for witnesses.<sup>103</sup> In a brief to the committee, the social media and technology company Meta, formerly known as Facebook, characterized its efforts to combat Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate speech as “a work in progress”.<sup>104</sup> According to Meta, the company closely monitors hate speech and works with stakeholders to address it on their platform. They noted that they specifically look out for attacks on an individual or group

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<sup>96</sup> Canadian Human Rights Commission, *Statement – We must do more to curb online hate*, 29 January 2021.

<sup>97</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 31 October 2022 (Yasmin Jiwani, Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Samira Laouni, President – Director of C.O.R. and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week).

<sup>101</sup> Foundation for a Path Forward, *“The Everywhere Threat: Risks to Canadian Society in the Digital Age and Solutions”*, Brief submitted to the committee, 13 October 2022.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Samira Laouni, President – Director of C.O.R. and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week); RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Kasari Govender, British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner); RIDR, *Evidence*, 31 October 2022 (Yasmin Jiwani, Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University).

<sup>104</sup> Meta, *“Briefing to Canada’s Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights: Meta’s approach to Hate Speech and Islamophobia”*, Brief submitted to the committee, 7 December 2022.

based on protected characteristics, including violent or dehumanizing speech, harmful stereotypes, and exclusion or segregation. They also prohibit content that targets people with slurs. To provide protection, they categorize attacks into three tiers of severity, for example, allowing criticism of immigration policies but forbidding attacks against refugees, migrants, immigrants, and asylum seekers.

In addition to this, Meta indicated that it had taken steps to engage with Muslim communities across various regions, including Canada, to gain insights into the challenges they face and to inform the development of their community standards. According to their brief, Meta has engaged in roundtables, one on one engagements, policy development discussions, and trend monitoring to understand the challenges faced by Muslim communities and to build sustainable and long-term relationships.<sup>105</sup>

Despite several witnesses raising concerns about the proliferation of hate speech on X (Twitter),<sup>106</sup> representatives from the company did not appear as part of this study. In November 2022, the committee learned through media reports that a representative who had agreed to appear had been fired, after which X (Twitter) declined to appear.

Acknowledging the difficulties associated with regulating online speech, Omar Mouallem emphasized that countering hate speech at an early age through education may be more efficient than attempts to regulate it:

*When encountering hate speech and anti-Muslim hate, I think that it becomes very difficult to radicalize people when they know better and when, from an early age, they have learned to respect and understand Muslims, when they understand the role that they have played in the society around them, when there is really less reason, or no reason, to fear them because they already feel like they know Muslim people, if not personally, then they know them culturally through their education, through pop culture and through the everyday conversations they might have in schools, workplaces and homes.<sup>107</sup>*

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 14 November 2022 (Samira Laouni, President – Director of C.O.R. and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kasari Govender, British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Yasmin Jiwani, Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University).

<sup>107</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Omar Mouallem, Author, Journalist and Filmmaker).

## Confronting Misinformation through Education

Throughout the committee's study, witnesses emphasized the importance of education at various levels as part of a long-term strategy to reduce racism and Islamophobia in Canadian society.

The importance of early education in shaping attitudes and addressing Islamophobia was highlighted by several witnesses. Citing the fact that many attacks on Canadian Muslims have been carried out by young men, some of whom had recently graduated from high school, Mustafa Farooq emphasized the critical role of education reform in addressing Islamophobia.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, Rachna Singh (Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives) discussed the need for a curriculum that appropriately introduces students to concepts relating to Islam and Muslims, and highlighted the launch of community roundtables with education stakeholders to inform the development of a provincial kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) Anti-Racism Action Plan in B.C.<sup>109</sup> Farha Shariff also noted that the Edmonton Police Service accepts applicants with a Grade 12 high school diploma, and that the K-12 curriculum is therefore critical to training future police officers, as well as shaping society more broadly.<sup>110</sup>

Leigh Naturkach (Executive Director, Mosaic Institute) emphasized the first step towards creating change is through education and changing understanding. This involves helping young people comprehend concepts like identity and effective communication across differences, which can challenge any preconceived notions they may have picked up from their communities. Once this foundation is established, the focus can shift towards working collaboratively with these individuals to develop social action plans that can bring about change not only within their communities and organizations but also on a systemic level.<sup>111</sup>

Citizenship education was highlighted as a vital instrument for fighting discrimination and fostering understanding among young people. Daniel J. Kuhlen (Lawyer, NCCM) commended the Concentus Citizenship Education Foundation's citizenship education as a crucial tool in combating discrimination. The foundation, which originated from a 2012 initiative by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, has created a pedagogical framework tailored for K-12 students. The framework highlights citizenship responsibilities and educates young Canadians on discrimination, Islamophobia, and other forms of intolerance. Daniel J. Kuhlen underscored the foundation's belief in upholding citizens' rights, while also recognizing corresponding responsibilities when exercising these rights.<sup>112</sup>

Heather Fenyes (Board Chair, Concentus Citizenship Education Foundation) further elaborated upon this approach. She explained that the citizenship education nurtures critical thinking, empathy, and civic engagement among youth, helping them become lifelong learners who

<sup>108</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Mustafa Farooq, Chief Executive Director, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>109</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Rachna Singh, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Surrey-Green Timbers and Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives).

<sup>110</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Farha Shariff, Dean's office, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta).

<sup>111</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Leigh Naturkach, Executive Director, Mosaic Institute).

<sup>112</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Daniel J. Kuhlen, Lawyer, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

understand and apply their rights and responsibilities as citizens in different communities. By engaging in citizenship education, they learn to question, examine, advocate, and defend democratic principles, demonstrate a strong sense of self, community, and place, and value positive commitments to citizenship responsibilities at various levels.<sup>113</sup>

Peter Flegel agreed that education and knowledge of citizenship rights and responsibilities provide powerful tools “to change minds, to combat hate, [and] to combat Islamophobia.”<sup>114</sup> He noted that the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat had heard as much from hundreds of stakeholders across Canada. Accordingly, he stated that the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat is considering this input as they strive to develop a new National Action Plan on Combatting Hate and Canada's new federal anti-racism strategy.<sup>115</sup>

While Anver Saloojee agreed with the importance of developing curricula that furthers inclusivity for K-12 students, he also suggested extending it to Canada’s universities. He stated that such a curriculum would:

*go a long way towards creating a more harmonious, hopefully more inclusive, Canada and give both non-Muslims and Muslims comfort in the view that a Canada that welcomes Muslims and welcomes the contributions of Canadian Muslims is one that will stand the test of time and will actually be an exemplar for other nations in the world.*<sup>116</sup>

He added that education helping individuals come to term with Islamophobia should even be extended to professional development for those in federal and provincial public office. As an example, when the Peel School Board in Ontario approved an anti-Islamophobia strategy last October, including mandatory training for teachers, it established, in his view, what should be a precedent across Canada. Farha Shariff also noted that, “More education is needed in all public sectors including health care, education, the judicial system, law enforcement and other public institutions to actively educate and sensitize average Canadians to the problem of systemic racism, religious discrimination, specifically Islamophobia.”<sup>117</sup>

Kashif Ahmed told the committee about Ontario's *Our London Family Act (Working Together to Combat Islamophobia and Hatred)*. This legislation was created in response to the terrorist attack that occurred in London, Ontario, and includes a section focused on reforming the education system. Among other aspects, the Act mandates that government and district school boards in

<sup>113</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 21 September 2022, (Heather Fenyes, Board Chair, Cententus Citizenship Education Foundation).

<sup>114</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 13 June 2022 (Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 22 September 2022 (Anver Saloojee, Interim Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion, Toronto Metropolitan University).

<sup>117</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Farha Shariff, Senior Advisor for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization, on behalf of the Dean’s office, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta).

Ontario develop a provincial anti-racism strategy for schools, as well as establish a complaint process for students, teachers, education workers, staff, and family members to report instances of discrimination, including Islamophobia. Mr. Ahmed informed the committee that this curriculum is being taught to children, specifically at the primary and secondary school levels, and that needs to grow to places like B.C., Alberta and elsewhere.<sup>118</sup>

Regarding education initiatives in B.C., Rachna Singh informed the committee that the government of B.C. had funded the Foundation For A Path Forward, a Muslim-led organization, to act as the faith community convener for the province of B.C. The organization has focused on raising awareness on Islamophobia through education and engagement, accomplishing this by launching road shows, broadcasts, and interfaith exchanges at various places of worship across B.C. Their aim is to facilitate understanding and encourage members of faith-based and racialized communities to fight against exclusion and discrimination.<sup>119</sup>

Rachna Singh emphasized the significance of education in teaching children about the colonial history of B.C., highlighting local Muslim stories and the roots of Islamophobia. Despite the fact that the current school curriculum covers relevant topics related to Islamophobia, she acknowledged that a more in-depth review and overhaul of the curriculum relating to Islam and Muslims is necessary, with the development of resources to inform Muslim identities. She noted that the ministry of education is also developing an anti-racism action plan for K-12 students and staff, to offer guidance on how to respond to incidents of hate and racism.<sup>120</sup>

Other witnesses, such as Yasmeen Abu-Laban (Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Politics of Citizenship and Human Rights and Fellow, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, University of Alberta) explained that education is a multidimensional issue that goes beyond what happens in schools, since what students learn in the K-12 curriculum can be undermined by what students are exposed to in the media or from other sources.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kashif Ahmed, Board Chairman, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>119</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Rachna Singh, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Surrey-Green Timbers and Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Yasmeen Abu-Laban, Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Politics of Citizenship and Human Rights and Fellow, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, University of Alberta).



Arfeen Malick expressed doubts about whether education alone can effectively address Islamophobia. According to her, for education to work, people must be willing to engage with it and have respect for the education system. She stated that students that return to their homes where they are exposed to messages propagated by the media and their families will likely not change their minds. She stated:

*Fundamentally, I think that first we need to look at what is influencing youth and what, over the last 20 to 30 years, have they and their parents seen, witnessed and been normalized in — the justice system, in politics, and in the media — and targeted with, and then we can probably make some moves in terms of bringing people to the education system so that they're able to listen and hear.<sup>122</sup>*

Taha Ghayyur (Member, Canadian Council of Imams) argued that while education is essential to creating positive change in society, engagement is even more critical. Cultural engagement, he stated, is crucial to education, and students should have the opportunity to hear from individuals with personal experience of Islamophobia. He also emphasized the importance of centring and amplifying Muslim voices in creating a more inclusive society.<sup>123</sup> David Fisher (Executive Director of Cententus Citizenship Education Foundation) agreed that education should be a part of the approach to combat Islamophobia, alongside other approaches suggested to the committee. He specified, however, that teachers need to be provided “with better tools throughout all grades to make this approach a basic part of Canadian education.”<sup>124</sup>

Amira Elghawaby shared with the committee how Veterans Affairs Canada offers free resources to teachers each year that can be ordered online or mailed. While it is a federal level initiative for a national holiday, the resources are distributed across the country. She noted that this initiative raises an interesting question whether there are resources available at a national level to help teachers in Canada to address topics like Islamophobia, anti-racism, or citizenship in a similar manner. She committed to discovering what other tools to promote education and awareness on Islamophobia and the valuable contributions of Muslims in Canada<sup>125</sup>

Witnesses spoke of the importance of federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments improving coordination in their efforts to combat hate and to promote multiculturalism, especially through education.<sup>126</sup> Although the federal government has recently increased funding for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Kashif Ahmed (Board Chairman, NCCM) stated that much more needs to be done, including “difficult conversations between different levels of government

<sup>122</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Dr. Arfeen Malick, Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada).

<sup>123</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Taha Ghayyur, Member, Canadian Council of Imams).

<sup>124</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (David Fisher, Executive Director, Cententus Citizenship Education Foundation).

<sup>125</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 27 March 2023 (Amira Elghawaby, Canada’s Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia).

<sup>126</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kashif Ahmed, Board Chairman, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

and stakeholders.”<sup>127</sup> Anver Saloojee highlighted that, “There’s a significant gap in recognizing the need, and then having the resources to respond. Community and public interest groups would make available human resources to support closing that gap, but federal and provincial funding is vital.”<sup>128</sup> The NCCM recommended investments in anti-Islamophobia public service announcements to educate the larger public.<sup>129</sup> Mustafa Farooq reasoned, “We’ve changed Canadians’ attitudes in relation to smoking and other various public health approaches. We can change it around Islamophobia too.”<sup>130</sup>

## The Role of Federal Institutions in Confronting Misinformation and Hate Speech

Federal institutions in Canada play an important role in confronting misinformation and hate speech.

Under the *Broadcasting Act*, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is tasked with regulating and supervising all aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system in a manner consistent with Canada’s broadcasting policy. This includes the principle that the Canadian broadcasting system should:

*through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society.*<sup>131</sup>

Several witnesses told the committee that the mandate and enforcement powers of the CRTC should be strengthened. For example, Mohamad El Hafid, a survivor of the 2017 attack on the Great Mosque of Quebec, noted that hundreds of hateful comments appear online every day in connection with stories about Muslims, and spoke of the need for further action by the CRTC, politicians, and other actors.<sup>132</sup> He stated:

<sup>127</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Kashif Ahmed, Board Chairman, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>128</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Amyn B. Sajoo, Scholar-in-Residence and Lecturer, School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University).

<sup>129</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Kashif Ahmed, Board Chairman, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>130</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 13 June 2022 (Mustafa Farooq, Chief Executive Director, National Council of Canadian Muslims).

<sup>131</sup> *Broadcasting Act*, S.C. 1991, c. 11, s. 3(1)(iii).

<sup>132</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 September 2022 (Mohamad El Hafid). See also RIDR, *Evidence*, 21 September 2022 (Omar Zia, Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario).



*We need action to revitalize the CRTC by condemning racism and Islamophobia. Our elected representatives shouldn't hesitate to condemn racism and Islamophobia when they appear in the media. They should also refuse to encourage media outlets that base their business on intolerance and invite everyone else not to do so. Advertisers should withdraw their ads. All governments contribute to the funding of Quebec City radio stations through advertising campaigns. That support should be conditional on strict compliance with basic principles of journalistic conduct.*

...

*The Internet giants should also be required to invest in monitoring hateful and Islamophobic messages on social media and held responsible and accountable for this outpouring of hatred and Islamophobia on their platforms.<sup>133</sup>*

According to Omar Zia, the CRTC should have expanded powers to oversee the narratives propagated through various forms of media in Canada, including any channels from foreign countries. He explained that some families rely solely on news and talk radio for their information, and without oversight, messages containing hatred and Islamophobia can spread.<sup>134</sup>

Canada's criminal hate speech provisions apply equally to both online and offline content. As noted above, sections 318, 319(1) and 319(2) of the *Criminal Code* set out specific offences relating to advocating genocide, publicly inciting hatred against an identifiable group or willfully promoting hatred. However, hateful online speech that does not meet this high criminal threshold is not regulated at the federal level.

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<sup>133</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Mohamad El Hafid). See also RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Omar Zia, Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

Professor Yasmin Jiwani explained that much of the language used to perpetuate racism is coded, making it difficult to detect and regulate. In a time when internet memes can go unnoticed by censors, she highlighted that it is essential to analyze the ways in which racism is articulated, the words used to support it, and how they are constantly changing.<sup>135</sup> Anver Emon (Professor of Law and History, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto) similarly emphasized the complexities of regulating online hate, stating:

*I struggle with [online hate] because of its nefariousness and its evanescent qualities. What I struggle with is an inability or unwillingness to go after the platforms, but a willingness to go after the individual accounts. ... I'm not entirely certain that the online platforms are the only thing that we need to deal with. We need to have better end users. We need to have better readers.<sup>136</sup>*

Kasari Govender spoke about B.C.'s experience conducting an inquiry into hate during the Covid-19 pandemic. She highlighted the need for federal action to regulate online hate, noting that there is no law outside of the criminal context that explicitly deals with the problem of online hate. She explained some of the important considerations when filling this legal vacuum, stating her hope that:

*Our approach to online hate in whatever form from whichever level of government explicitly acknowledges that human rights that are at stake when we allow hateful speech to flourish [because] these spaces aren't neutral spaces for anybody to contribute to. In fact, hate gets promoted through the use of algorithms on online spaces, and that means that more people are reached and therefore more people are silenced in that process.<sup>137</sup>*

Evan Balgord (Executive Director, Canadian Anti-Hate Network) proposed an "ombudsperson model" to address online hate. Under this model, a regulator would have broad investigative powers to examine social media companies and issue recommendations. The regulator could demand information from companies on their algorithms and operations, and issue recommendations for changes to address issues like hate. If companies refuse to comply, the ombudsperson could seek a court order for them to make the necessary changes.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Yasmin Jiwani, Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University).

<sup>136</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 June 2022 (Anver Emon, Professor of Law and History, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto).

<sup>137</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Kasari Govender, British Columbia Human Rights Commissioner).

<sup>138</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Evan Balgord, Executive Director, Canadian Anti-Hate Network).

Witnesses highlighted that in December 2021, the prime minister sent a mandate letter to the Minister of Public Safety, asking for support in creating a national action plan to combat hate. As a result, the Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat is partnering with various departments and stakeholders to renew Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy and release the country's first National Action Plan on Combatting Hate. Witnesses informed the committee that the development of the National Action Plan on Hate is ongoing and will take into account input from communities and best practices from around the world. As noted earlier, citizenship education is being considered in the development of the new plan.<sup>139</sup>

Additionally, the RCMP's modernization agenda is in line with the Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service, as well as Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy and the National Action Plan on Combatting Hate.<sup>140</sup>

Evan Baggord also talked to the committee about the regulation of hate speech and the use of former section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. He explained that former section 13 allowed victims of hate speech to bring a complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. The tribunal could issue a cease-and-desist order and a small fine, similar to a court order. He noted that it was successfully used to shut down several neo-Nazi groups. However, the government removed this provision and now relies on section 319 of the *Criminal Code*, which prohibits the wilful promotion of hatred towards a group. According to him, the police “are not particularly interested” in pursuing section 319 causes.<sup>141</sup> He noted that he provided evidence to the Ottawa Police Service about an incident in which he believes Rebel Media violated 319(2) of the *Criminal Code*, but they chose not to pursue an investigation. As such, Evan Baggord thinks that section 13 should be reinstated in order to allow individuals to represent themselves or victims, without the police acting as “gatekeepers.”<sup>142</sup>

However, Marcella Daye (Senior Policy Advisor, Policy, Research and International Relations Division, Canadian Human Rights Commission) pointed out some possible difficulties with this approach, noting that section 13 was originally used to address hate speech communicated by telephone, and was not well suited to the Internet. She argued that the reintroduction of section 13 – as proposed by two recent bills<sup>143</sup> – would be like “providing a fly swatter to fight off a meteor

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<sup>139</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 14 November 2022 (Chad Westmacott, Director General, Community Safety, Corrections and Criminal Justice, Public Safety Canada); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage).

<sup>140</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 14 November 2022 (Nadine Huggins, Chief Human Resources Officer, Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

<sup>141</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 31 October 2022 (Evan Baggord, Executive Director, Canadian Anti-Hate Network).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Bill C-261, [An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act and to make related amendments to another Act \(hate propaganda, hate crimes and hate speech\)](#), 44th Parliament, 1st session; Bill C-36, [An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act and to make related amendments to another Act \(hate propaganda, hate crimes and hate speech\)](#), 43rd Parliament, 2nd session.

shower. The world is different. We need many more tools and a broad, comprehensive approach.”<sup>144</sup>

The committee acknowledges that the Internet presents significant challenges to regulating hate speech due to factors such as user anonymity, the proliferation of alternative platforms, and the enormous speed and scale of communication. While complex, these same factors point to the need for action to better protect vulnerable individuals and communities.

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<sup>144</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Marcella Daye, Senior Policy Advisor, Policy, Research and International Relations Division, CHRC).

## Addressing Systemic Islamophobia

Systemic Islamophobia occurs when the cumulative effects of laws, policies and practices result in Muslims being marginalized. This can occur even in the absence of malicious intent. The committee heard that systemic Islamophobia occurs in many contexts, including in laws and policies relating to national security, secularism, workplace discrimination, and the correctional system. While this report examines some egregious examples of systemic Islamophobia, the committee wishes to emphasize that systemic Islamophobia can be equally harmful in contexts where it is less visible.

The presence of systemic Islamophobia in federal policies was acknowledged by Peter Flegel (Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage), who informed the committee that “[s]ystemic Islamophobia, including surveillance of Muslim communities, remains a grave concern given the greatest threat to national security comes from White supremacist groups.”<sup>145</sup>

### National Security

A fundamental responsibility of the government is to protect all of its citizens. However, laws, policies and practices undertaken in the name of national security too often result in Canadians being less safe, as they foster a culture of surveillance and suspicion that disproportionately targets Muslims. This form of discrimination is dangerous not only because it harms and alienates Muslims – it also distorts perceptions of risk from other communities.

The committee heard numerous examples of Islamophobia in the context of national security. This section outlines several specific examples, with a particular focus on discriminatory effects in the charitable sector. The committee wishes to emphasize that in addition to necessary changes to legislation, oversight and training, the culture of the national security environment must fundamentally shift away from viewing Muslims as a greater security threat.

### Legal Framework

Canada’s current national security framework is the product of decades of legal and policy developments, notably including the *Anti-terrorism Act*, which was adopted following the attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001. The *Anti-terrorism Act* amended the *Criminal Code*, the *Canada Evidence Act* and other legislation to, among other things, create new offences relating to terrorism and its financing, and establish a system for listing terrorist entities.<sup>146</sup>

This framework has been reviewed and amended several times, including by the *Anti-terrorism Act, 2015*, and by the *National Security Act, 2017*. The *National Security Act, 2017* established new oversight bodies such as the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA), amended the enabling acts for the Communications Security Establishment and CSIS, created the *Avoiding*

<sup>145</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 June 2022 (Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage).

<sup>146</sup> See Government of Canada, [“About the Anti-terrorism Act.”](#)

*Complicity in Mistreatment by Foreign Entities Act* and amended information-sharing practices relating to the “no fly” list.<sup>147</sup> These changes were due to be reviewed by a parliamentary committee four years after coming into force.<sup>148</sup> Several witnesses agreed that a comprehensive review of national security legislation should indeed take place.<sup>149</sup>

## A Culture of Islamophobia

The committee heard that laws, policies and practices relating to national security are deeply rooted in Islamophobia and continue to perpetuate bias against Muslims. As noted by Tim McSorley (National Coordinator, International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group):

*Over the past few decades, studies have repeatedly documented the disproportionate impact of national security measures on Muslims in Canada. For example, a 2019 study found that 98% of individuals prosecuted under Criminal Code anti-terrorism provisions have been Muslims or linked to Muslim groups. The vast majority of these cases did not involve any executed act of violence whereas most White perpetrators of actual mass violence have not been prosecuted as terrorists.<sup>150</sup>*

During committee travel to various mosques, community leaders recounted being contacted by national security agencies for private interviews, leaving them feeling targeted and intimidated. Fahad Ahmad (Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University) explained that unsolicited visits by CSIS or the RCMP to Muslim workplaces, homes, and student associations stem from an institutional culture that views Muslims as a suspect community requiring surveillance. These practices often cross the line from community outreach to highly invasive investigations in which people are made to feel afraid, and factors such as precarious immigration status are exploited to coerce people into giving information.<sup>151</sup>

As recounted by several witnesses, a particularly egregious example of this behaviour occurred in the case of John Nuttall and Amanda Korody, two recent converts to Islam who were manipulated by undercover RCMP officers into engaging in criminal activities. In *R. v. Nuttall*, the B.C. Court of Appeal confirmed that the RCMP’s conduct in the investigation was a travesty of justice that constituted entrapment.<sup>152</sup> Temitope Oriola (Professor of Criminology and Sociology at the University of Alberta) compared the facts of the Nuttall case to the experience of one of his

<sup>147</sup> Tanya Dupuis et al., *Legislative Summary of Bill C-59: An Act respecting national security measures*, Library of Parliament, Publication No. 42-1-C59-E, 3 June 2019.

<sup>148</sup> *National Security Act, 2017*, S.C. 2019, c. 13, s. 168(1).

<sup>149</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 March 2023 (Abdul Nakua, Executive Member, Muslim Association of Canada); RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 March 2023 (Thomas Juneau, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa).

<sup>150</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 March 2023 (Tim McSorley, National Coordinator, International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group).

<sup>151</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 March 2023 (Fahad Ahmad, Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University).

<sup>152</sup> *R. v. Nuttall*, 2018 BCCA 479.



students. The student was confronted at a mosque by a man he believed to be an intelligence agent. The man attempted to “sound him out regarding whether he had extremist views or sympathies,” leaving him feeling unsafe and alarmed.<sup>153</sup> Professor Oriola explained that this type of invasive surveillance and targeting “not only harms the Muslim community, it also endangers national security” as it has contributed to “a blind spot toward right-wing extremist actors.”<sup>154</sup>

In response to questions from the committee about the Nuttall case, Mark Flynn (Assistant Commissioner, Federal Policing, National Security and Protective Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police) stated that RCMP national security units are rebuilding trust in Muslim communities through “significant engagement in various regions across the country,” adding that “we should not be judged by a single incident alone but by how we consistently engage those communities, hear the concerns and act differently from them.”<sup>155</sup>

While the committee welcomes institutional changes to guard against similar incidents in the future, it is concerned that the Nuttall case is not merely a single incident, but is indicative of a larger problem of surveillance and intimidation by national security agencies.

Islamophobia within national security agencies has profound and lasting effects on Muslim communities, while often diverting critical national security resources from more significant threats to Canadians. For example, as noted by Amira Elghawaby:

*What we have seen, historically, is a lack of attention on the rise of right-wing extremism. For instance, when we had the tragic killing of six worshippers at the Quebec City mosque, it came to light that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service had actually closed the desk that looked at right-wing extremism just a few months prior to that attack.*<sup>156</sup>

In testimony to the committee, several national security agencies highlighted the work that they are doing to increase diversity in their workforce and reduce bias in their operations. For example, as part of its plan to advance equity, accountability and trust, the RCMP has put in place a strategy that includes mandatory training on cultural awareness and humility, uniting against racism training, and a bias awareness assessment pilot for new recruits.<sup>157</sup> In addition, representatives from the RCMP emphasized that they have undertaken to avoid terminology in press releases and

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<sup>153</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Temitope Oriola, Professor of criminology and sociology at the University of Alberta and president-elect, Canadian Sociological Association).

<sup>154</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Temitope Oriola, Professor of criminology and sociology at the University of Alberta and president-elect, Canadian Sociological Association).

<sup>155</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Mark Flynn, Assistant Commissioner, Federal Policing, National Security and Protective Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

<sup>156</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 27 March 2023 (Amira Elghawaby, Canada’s Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia).

<sup>157</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Nadine Huggins, Chief Human Resources Officer, Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

media statements that could erroneously link the violent acts of an individual to the views of a religion.<sup>158</sup>

Similarly, CSIS has instituted new mandatory training that covers issues such as unconscious bias and cultural competency.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, in response to concerns about infiltration into CSIS by white supremacist groups, representatives from CSIS emphasized that robust security screening processes are in place to ensure that any potential employee with such views would be flagged and removed from consideration.<sup>160</sup>

Scott Millar (Vice President, Strategic Policy Branch, Canada Border Services Agency) also acknowledged that the CBSA is “in a fight against systemic racism,” and noted that it has instituted mandatory training for all employees on issues such as unconscious bias and discrimination. This training is being reviewed and adjusted “to counter Islamophobia more directly while integrating a deeper understanding of its roots and causes.”<sup>161</sup>

Chad Westmacott explained that Public Safety Canada, the department whose mandate encompasses the above agencies, similarly has mandatory training and other initiatives in place relating to issues of diversity and inclusion.<sup>162</sup>

Despite these advances, several witnesses spoke about the need to improve training within national security agencies to eliminate deeply embedded prejudices against Muslims. For example, Professor Ahmad described his experience attending RCMP training in which Islam was the predominant focus, and radicalization was presented as having an association with Muslims. Moreover, Professor Ahmad cited RCMP training materials obtained through an access to information request in which a young girl in a hijab was presented as “The Future of Terrorism.”<sup>163</sup> These examples indicate that although progress is being made to shift the culture of national security agencies, Islamophobia remains deeply embedded in these systems. Witnesses suggested that better training is required for all national security actors, from frontline officers to the judiciary.<sup>164</sup>

Witnesses spoke about the need for better training of CSIS, CBSA and RCMP officers, as well as for judges who hear immigration and national security-related matters. Barbara Jackman argued that

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<sup>158</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 14 November 2022 (Mark Flynn, Assistant Commissioner, Federal Policing, National Security and Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

<sup>159</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 28 November 2022 (Nicole Giles, Deputy Director, Policy and Strategic Partnerships, Canadian Security Intelligence Service).

<sup>160</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 28 November 2022 (Newton Shortliffe, Assistant Director, Collection, Canadian Security Intelligence Service).

<sup>161</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 28 November 2022 (Scott Millar, Vice President, Strategic Policy Branch, Canada Border Services Agency).

<sup>162</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 14 November 2022 (Chad Westmacott, Director General, Community Safety, Corrections and Criminal Justice, Public Safety Canada).

<sup>163</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 March 2023 (Fahad Ahmad, Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University).

<sup>164</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 March 2023 (Tim McSorley, National Coordinator, International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group).

there should be a specialized branch of the Federal Court to deal with these matters, and supported the idea of training for judges on Islamophobia.<sup>165</sup>

Additionally, witnesses spoke about the need to improve transparency as a means of improving institutional cultures. Professor Ahmad acknowledged that the creation of NSIRA was an important step in this regard, but argued that civilian oversight is necessary across federal agencies with a national security mandate. Moreover, he noted that the access to information system “is essentially broken because requests to the RCMP and CSIS either take far too long or, in some cases, receive no response.”<sup>166</sup>

Thomas Juneau (Associate Professor, University of Ottawa) emphasized to the committee that lack of transparency by the intelligence community is self-defeating, as it erodes community trust and contributes to information vacuums that can be exploited by hostile actors. Professor Juneau argued that broader transparency measures are required, including proactive and sustained engagement with stakeholders, the creation of systems to measure transparency within intelligence and national security departments and agencies, and engagement units with the appropriate skills and experience to positively engage with Muslim Canadians and other minority groups.<sup>167</sup>

## Profiling at the Border

For many Canadians, crossing the border is a routine experience that can occur without incident. However, this is often not the case for Muslims. Several witnesses recounted being regularly subjected to enhanced screening at airports, which they believe to be caused by discriminatory profiling. While proving discrimination in any individual case can be challenging, the committee notes that the prevalence of these stories point to the existence of systemic bias.

In particular, the committee heard about enhanced scrutiny of Muslims based on the Passenger Protect Program. The program screens individuals who seek to travel by air against a list of persons who have been deemed to pose a threat to air security. The maintenance of this list is the responsibility of the Minister of Public Safety under the *Secure Air Travel Act* (commonly referred to as Canada’s “No Fly List”). This list is not publicly available, and can therefore result in unexpected delays for individuals who share a name similar to that of someone on the list. To avoid false matches, Canadians who believe that they have been flagged due to a name similarity can apply for a unique Canadian Travel Number, which can be used as an additional piece of identification for travel.

In testimony to the committee, Bashir Ahmed Mohamed recounted the feeling of being othered when, at the age of 16, he was subjected to extra screening before a flight simply because his name was similar to that of a “deemed high profile” passenger on the No Fly List. Despite now serving as a naval officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, he continues to face enhanced scrutiny each time he

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<sup>165</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 March 2023 (Barbara Jackman, Lawyer, Jackman and Associates).

<sup>166</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 March 2023 (Fahad Ahmad, Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University).

<sup>167</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 March 2023 (Thomas Juneau, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa).

flies. Nevertheless, he has chosen not to apply for a Canadian Travel Number out of principle, arguing that the program fails to address the need for better intelligence and security infrastructure, and that using it would perpetuate the idea that he is a different type of Canadian.<sup>168</sup>

Similarly, other witnesses spoke about losing faith in the fairness of national security organizations based on their experiences in airports.<sup>169</sup> Ahmad Attia (Member of the Peel Police Services Board and CEO of Incisive Strategy) highlighted that CBSA officers have a great deal of discretionary power with little scrutiny, and are therefore “much more prone to abuse through systemic discrimination but also individual biases, the consequences of which have been devastating to the Muslim community.”<sup>170</sup>

Scott Millar assured the committee that the CBSA welcomes complaints and questions about the conduct of its officers, and that people can do so through the CBSA’s online recourse mechanism. Moreover, he highlighted the introduction of Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments, which is currently before Parliament and would create a commission to deal with complaints from the public regarding the RCMP and the CBSA.<sup>171</sup>

## Discrimination in the Charitable Sector

Finally, the committee heard that charitable works are the heart of Muslim communities, but that Muslim charities are disproportionately targeted by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for audit and revocation.<sup>172</sup> Various forms of structural bias appear to be responsible, including bias that casts Muslims as outsiders and a threat to national security, and bias that views valid religious activities as primarily those that are grounded in Christian ideals and practices.

Witnesses cited two 2021 reports that brought to light the issue of disproportionate revocation of Muslim charities by the CRA’s Review and Analysis Division (RAD). The first report – released by the NCCM and the University of Toronto’s Institute of Islamic Studies – found that federal anti-terrorism financing and anti-radicalization policies “create the conditions for potential structural bias against Muslim-led charities” when operationalized by the CRA’s Charities Directorate and RAD. Its recommendations included the suspension of RAD pending review.<sup>173</sup> The second report – published by the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group – reached similar conclusions,

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<sup>168</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Bashir Ahmed Mohamed, as an individual).

<sup>169</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 June 2022 (Mohammed Hashim, Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation)

<sup>170</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 28 November 2022 (Ahmad Attia, Member of the Peel Police Services Board and CEO of Incisive Strategy).

<sup>171</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 28 November 2022 (Scott Millar, Vice President, Strategic Policy Branch, Canada Border Services Agency); Bill C-20, [An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments](#), 44th Parliament, 1st session.

<sup>172</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 28 November 2022 (Ahmad Attia, Member of the Peel Police Services Board and CEO of Incisive Strategy).

<sup>173</sup> Anver Emon and Nadia Hasan, [Under Layered Suspicion](#), March 2021.

focusing in particular on the lack of independent oversight and accountability with respect to RAD decisions, and recommending, among other things, that NSIRA undertake a review of this issue.<sup>174</sup>

Since its establishment in 2008, RAD has completed a total of 39 audits, 14 of which resulted in revocation of a charity's status.<sup>175</sup> According to analysis by the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, 75% of RAD revocations occurring between 2008 and 2015 were of Muslim charities, despite Muslim charities representing less than 1% of all charities in Canada.<sup>176</sup>

In testimony to the committee, representatives from the CRA explained that the Charities Directorate takes a risk-based approach to selecting charities for audit based on their assessed risk of non-compliance. Specifically, RAD audits charities where there is a perceived risk of terrorist financing. Geoff Trueman (Assistant Commissioner, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, CRA) emphasized that "under no circumstances does the Charities Directorate select charities for audit based on factors such as faith or denomination, nor would such factors influence the outcome of an audit."<sup>177</sup> Instead, RAD is guided by the Government of Canada's National Inherent Risk Assessment (NIRA), which sets out the government's understanding of which actors pose the greatest threat to national security. The Department of Finance last updated NIRA in 2015.

The committee heard that of the groups identified by NIRA as posing the greatest risk of terrorism financing in Canada, eight are Muslim, one is Tamil and one is Sikh. Moreover, the eleventh category – foreign fighters – is defined in a way that disproportionately includes Muslims.<sup>178</sup> Anver Emon suggested that as white supremacy and other forms of extremism are on the rise globally, this threat assessment is either out of date or expressly Islamophobic.<sup>179</sup>

Sharmila Khare (Director General, Charities Directorate, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, CRA) stated that she does "not believe there is structural bias targeting Muslim-led charities within the Canada Revenue Agency," noting that the CRA takes anti-racism very seriously.<sup>180</sup> However, she acknowledged that "you could reach the conclusion that many of the organizations that are listed in [NIRA] do come from racialized communities."<sup>181</sup>

While the committee understands that updating NIRA is not the responsibility of the CRA, it is clear that RAD's work to date – regardless of the intentions of its employees – has demonstrated structural bias against Muslim charities.

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<sup>174</sup> Tim McSorley, *The CRA's Prejudiced Audits*, May 2021.

<sup>175</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 28 November 2022 (Sharmila Khare, Director General, Charities Directorate, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency).

<sup>176</sup> Tim McSorley, *The CRA's Prejudiced Audits*, May 2021, p. 5; RIDR, *Evidence*, 21 November 2022 (Nabil Sultan, Director of Communications & Community Engagement, Muslim Association of Canada).

<sup>177</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 28 November 2022 (Geoff Trueman, Assistant Commissioner, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency).

<sup>178</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 20 June 2022 (Anver Emon, Professor of Law and History, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto).

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 28 November 2022 (Sharmila Khare, Director General, Charities Directorate, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency).

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

Terrance S. Carter (lawyer, Carters Professional Corporation) explained the overwhelming burden that RAD audits place on charities, stating that:

*RAD audits are extremely detailed and complex, producing audit reports that are voluminous in length, that analyze tens and sometimes hundreds of thousands of emails as well as the charity's online presence.*

*The audits can extend over lengthy periods of time, sometimes lasting up to five years or more. The audits are very difficult for the charity to respond to because registered charities have the obligation to refute every allegation raised in an audit, including disproving every suggestion and innuendo about alleged involvement with possible terrorist financing. In essence, the charity is presumed to be guilty until it can prove that all of the allegations and suspicions raised by RAD are baseless, which is generally an impossible threshold to meet.<sup>182</sup>*

Representatives from the CRA explained that after RAD has decided to revoke a charity's status or issue a penalty, the charity can appeal this decision.<sup>183</sup> However, Khaled Al-Qazzaz (Senior Advisor, Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council) questioned the utility of this mechanism, stating that "there is almost no oversight. There is an official appeal mechanism that everybody knows in the charity sector that does not work."<sup>184</sup> Among other factors, the length of this process can be fatal to charities. Ahmad Attia explained that:

*Once in the media, allegations of charity's ties to terrorism have a chilling impact on the charity itself, its beneficiaries and its donors. Donors can no longer support funding the organization to take legal action to appeal those decisions because the charitable status has been lost. There is also a fear of repercussion by donors to give and fund that charity because of the allegations.<sup>185</sup>*

Similarly, during a site visit to the ISNA mosque in Mississauga, the committee heard that the aftermath of a CRA audit continues to hinder their work on many levels. In subsequent testimony, Ahmad Attia noted that "ISNA Canada was once a national organization, and after being suspended for a year by RAD, it is now limited to a select few mosques and schools."<sup>186</sup>

<sup>182</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023 (Terrance S. Carter, Lawyer, Carters Professional Corporation).

<sup>183</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 28 November 2022 (Sharmila Khare, Director General, Charities Directorate, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency).

<sup>184</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 22 September 2022 (Khaled Al-Qazzaz, Senior Advisor, Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council).

<sup>185</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 28 November 2022 (Ahmad Attia, Member of the Peel Police Services Board and CEO of Incisive Strategy).

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.



Moreover, Nabil Sultan (Director of Communications & Community Engagement, Muslim Association of Canada) argued that “for many Muslim charities, when the CRA has not been able to identify findings of terrorism, it instead revokes and sanctions Muslim charities based upon technical faults that could be addressed without sanctions.”<sup>187</sup> Terrance Carter agreed that RAD can use minor matters of non-compliance with the *Income Tax Act* to deregister a charity that it perceives as a problem “without ever having to prove that support of terrorism financing that is taking place.”<sup>188</sup>

Terrance Carter noted that charities in Canada are not being charged with terrorist activities. He argued that if there were genuine concerns about terrorism financing, such matters could be referred to the RCMP, rather than being dealt with through audits that have little oversight or accountability and require no proof.<sup>189</sup>

In addition to national security-related audits, the committee heard that Muslim charities are often discriminated against based on misconceptions of Islam, and bias that views valid religious activities as primarily those that resemble Christian practices. For example, Nabil Sultan criticized the CRA’s characterization of Eid festivals as insufficiently religious due to their social elements, arguing that the same standard would not be applied to similar celebrations in other faiths.<sup>190</sup>

These and other reasons for the disproportionate targeting of Muslim charities may not be fully understood, as efforts to investigate CRA practices have faced multiple roadblocks. In response to recommendations at the 2021 national summit on Islamophobia, the Minister of National Revenue requested a review of RAD by the Office of the Taxpayer Ombudsperson.

However, in testimony to the committee, François Boileau (Ombudsperson, Office of the Taxpayer Ombudsperson) indicated that he was unable to do this work effectively due to legislative barriers. He explained that because of constraints set out in the *Income Tax Act*, he was unable to access key information held by the CRA. The Ombudsperson agreed with senators that this impasse was like trying to do his work with one hand tied behind his back. He suggested that NSIRA may be better positioned to complete this work in a fulsome way.<sup>191</sup>

Following the Ombudsperson’s testimony to the committee, NSIRA reopened its analysis of this issue, and on 8 March 2023 committed to undertake its own investigation of RAD. In testimony to the committee, the Honourable Marie Deschamps (Chair, NSIRA) explained that NSIRA had considered doing such an investigation in 2021, but determined that it should avoid duplicating the work of the Ombudsperson. She assured the committee that NSIRA has broader statutory authority to investigate, promising that:

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<sup>187</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Nabil Sultan, Director of Communications & Community Engagement, Muslim Association of Canada).

<sup>188</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2023 (Terrance S. Carter, Lawyer, Carters Professional Corporation).

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Nabil Sultan, Director of Communications & Community Engagement, Muslim Association of Canada).

<sup>191</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (François Boileau, Ombudsperson, Office of the Taxpayer Ombudsperson).

*NSIRA's review will focus on the division's activities and decision making related to registered Canadian charities, and we will assess the reasonableness, necessity and compliance with the law of those activities. With access to all information, except cabinet confidence, NSIRA is positioned to conduct a thorough, independent and fact-based review of the division.<sup>192</sup>*

The Ombudsperson's March 2023 report confirmed that comprehensive review of the CRA's audit process for charities had not been possible, but did nevertheless recommend that the CRA create an unconscious bias training course for employees of the Charities Directorate.<sup>193</sup> In testimony to the committee, Sharmila Khare stated that all of the auditors in RAD take multiple courses relating to unconscious bias, but that such training is not mandatory.<sup>194</sup>

Relatedly, Ahmad Attia called on the CRA to provide greater transparency regarding the RAD process, including by publishing faith-based disaggregated data on the charities being audited. He emphasized that the purpose of this collection and disclosure would not be to assist the CRA in doing its job, but "to prove to the public and build trust in the public that their audits are not prejudicing or disproportionately targeting a certain community."<sup>195</sup>

## Secularism

Freedom of conscience and religion is a fundamental human right that is recognized in various international treaties to which Canada is a party, and by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the Charter). The right to reasonable accommodations for religious beliefs is similarly protected by federal, provincial and territorial human rights laws. While the religious neutrality of public institutions is also an important value, witnesses were disturbed by the emergence of laws that cross the line from upholding religious neutrality to imposing religious discrimination.

Of particular concern to many witnesses was Quebec's 2019 *Act respecting the laicity of the State*,<sup>196</sup> commonly referred to as Bill 21. Bill 21 purports to be based on principles that include freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, and the equality of all citizens,<sup>197</sup> but simultaneously invokes section 33 of the Charter (the notwithstanding clause) to shield it from constitutional scrutiny based on these very principles. Moreover, by prohibiting certain persons from wearing religious symbols while exercising their functions, the law disproportionately affects

<sup>192</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 27 March 2023 (The Honourable Marie Deschamps, Chair, National Security and Intelligence Review Agency).

<sup>193</sup> Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsperson, *Charity Begins with Fairness: More to Explore*, 27 March 2023.

<sup>194</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 28 November 2022 (Sharmila Khare, Director General, Charities Directorate, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency).

<sup>195</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 28 November 2022 (Ahmad Attia, Member of the Peel Police Services Board and CEO of Incisive Strategy).

<sup>196</sup> Quebec, *Act respecting the laicity of the State*, l-0.3.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, s. 2.

Muslim women who serve or aspire to serve in public sector careers such as teachers, lawyers or police officers.

As an example of the consequences of Bill 21, several witnesses spoke about Fatemeh Anvari, a schoolteacher who lost her job at a Chelsea Elementary School because she wears a hijab. Local parents protested her firing and questioned how they could explain it to their children.<sup>198</sup> Samira Laouni (President – Director of C.O.R. and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week) expressed concern that “by directly discriminating against women who wear the hijab, [Bill 21] legitimizes prejudice against all Muslims, or those presumed to be Muslim,” adding that “it is equally unacceptable to force women to wear the hijab, as is happening in Iran, or to ban it at work.”<sup>199</sup>

The Quebec legislature’s use of the notwithstanding clause protects Bill 21 from being overturned on the basis of several fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of conscience and religion under section 2(a) of the Charter. In 2021, the Quebec Superior Court largely upheld the constitutionality of Bill 21 for this reason, but nevertheless expressed serious concerns about the impact of the legislation. In testimony to the committee, Professor Sajoo referenced this decision, noting that the court found that Bill 21 dehumanizes those who are targeted by it, but is legally unassailable due to its use of the notwithstanding clause.<sup>200</sup> Specifically, the court stated that the law “sends the message that people practising their faith do not deserve to fully participate in Quebec society” [translation]<sup>201</sup> and that:

*All those individuals who aspire to one of these jobs find themselves in the following dilemma: either they follow their heart and conscience, which in this case means their beliefs, or they work in their chosen occupation. It is easy to see that this is a cruel outcome that dehumanizes those affected. [translation]<sup>202</sup>*

Bill 21 continues to be challenged in the courts on the basis that it infringes the right to gender equality set out in section 28 of the Charter. Sameer Zuberi noted that the federal government has committed to intervene when a challenge to Bill 21 reaches the Supreme Court of Canada, and has also expressed that “the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause is deeply troubling.”<sup>203</sup>

<sup>198</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Aryn B. Sajoo, Scholar-in-Residence and Lecturer, School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University).

<sup>199</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Samira Laouni, President – Director of C.O.R. and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week).

<sup>200</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 7 September 2022 (Aryn B. Sajoo, Scholar-in-Residence and Lecturer, School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University).

<sup>201</sup> *Hak v. Attorney General of Quebec*, 2021 QCCS 1466 (CanLII), para 65.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, para 69.

<sup>203</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 13 February 2023 (Sameer Zuberi, Member of Parliament, Pierrefonds–Dollard).

Moreover, he noted that the use of the notwithstanding clause provides an opportunity every five years for the law to lapse, as the invocation of section 33 will expire unless it is renewed.<sup>204</sup>

The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) told the committee that it continues to intervene in the constitutional challenge to Bill 21, taking the position that it is “government-imposed workplace discrimination.” Marie-Claude Landry (Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, CHRC) added that “laws in Canada should seek to end discrimination — not promote it or reinforce it.”<sup>205</sup> Professor Perry specifically criticized the use of the notwithstanding clause, arguing that “Charter rights need to prevail here. I think we need to take a firmer stance on that.”<sup>206</sup>

While the direct consequences of Bill 21 are troubling, the committee was disturbed to hear that it has also indirectly emboldened racist fringe groups and individuals.<sup>207</sup> As explained by Laïla Aitoumasste (Coordinator, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City):

*It isn't just the workplace; it's also in society, outdoors, in the street. It's as though certain individuals have been given permission — I'm not generalizing here; I'm not going to say that Quebec as a whole or all of Quebec City is racist, far from it — to say that, because we wear the hijab, we don't have a right to work, we don't have a right to exist, we don't even have a right to be here, and we should go back where we came from. And I hear that often.*<sup>208</sup>

These perceptions appear to be widespread. Thérèse Sagna (Board Member, Fédération des femmes du Québec) pointed to a study showing that:

*73% of Muslim women have not felt as safe in public since the passage of Bill 21; 57% of Muslim women indicated a significant reluctance to express themselves freely in public; 80% of Muslim women lost hope for the future of their children in Quebec; more than 66% of Muslim women in Quebec were subjected to hate and other incidents.*<sup>209</sup>

Maxim Fortin (Quebec City Chapter Coordinator, Ligue des droits et libertés) similarly observed that public debate over secularism and religious symbols has closely correlated to a rise in hate crimes,

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Human Rights Commission)

<sup>206</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Barbara Perry, Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University).

<sup>207</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Samer Majzoub, President, Canadian Muslim Forum); Kashif Ahmed

<sup>208</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Laïla Aitoumasste, Coordinator, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City).

<sup>209</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Thérèse Sagna, Board Member, Fédération des femmes du Québec).

particularly hate crimes motivated by Islamophobia.<sup>210</sup> He suggested that those who engage in debates relating to secularism should do so responsibly, with the knowledge that inflammatory rhetoric has real consequences for marginalized communities.

Boufeldja Benabdallah (Co-founder and spokesperson, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City) argued that the aspects of Bill 21 that rely on the notwithstanding clause are discriminatory and Islamophobic, but emphasized that the majority of Canadian and Quebec society is not Islamophobic.<sup>211</sup>

Karim Elabed (Imam of Mosquée de Lévis) explained that when he moved his family to settle down in Quebec in 2008, he felt privileged not to be judged by his race or religion, as he had been in France. However, he has since seen a rise in racism and Islamophobia, culminating in legislation like Bill 21 that mirrors developments in France. He noted that “the principle is to try to separate everything religious from the state” but that “this principle is distorted because secularism does not mean removing religions from the public space. Secularism means that the institutions of a country must be at an equal distance from all religions.”<sup>212</sup>

Ultimately, Bill 21 has prompted many Muslims to leave Quebec, seeking career opportunities and greater inclusion elsewhere.<sup>213</sup> Dr. Malick (Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada) noted that this is especially troubling since the absence of visibly Muslim teachers reduces the exposure of children to different cultures, potentially perpetuating further prejudice.<sup>214</sup>

Rizwana Kaderdina (Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario) described Bill 21 as the “embodiment of the idea that to be visible in your Muslim-ness is to be unacceptable in the public Canadian sphere.”<sup>215</sup> Witnesses broadly agreed that Bill 21 is discriminatory, that it has exacerbated Islamophobia, and that it should be repealed.<sup>216</sup>

Furqan Abbassi (Member and Entrepreneur, Soul Brothers Pakistan) expressed fear that other provinces may enact legislation similar to Bill 21, and sadness for his children, stating that:

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<sup>210</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Maxim Fortin, Quebec City Chapter Coordinator, Ligue des droits et libertés).

<sup>211</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Boufeldja Benabdallah, Co-founder and spokesperson, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City).

<sup>212</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 March 2023 (Karim Elabed, Imam of Mosquée de Lévis, Association des musulmanes et musulmans du Grand Lévis).

<sup>213</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Mohamed Labidi, President, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City).

<sup>214</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Dr. Arfeen Malick, Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada).

<sup>215</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Rizwana Kaderdina, Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario).

<sup>216</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Boufeldja Benabdallah, Co-founder and spokesperson, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Nabila Daoudi); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Nadège Rosine Toguem, Collective for the fight and action against racism); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Yasser Lahlou, Muslim Students’ Association of the University of Montreal); RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Nadège Rosine Toguem, Collective for the fight and action against racism).

*What if one day my daughter chooses to wear a scarf? How do I prepare my daughter who wants to be a doctor, lawyer or a politician...to be able to overcome additional obstacles, hardships and even discrimination in order to pursue her dreams? That one day she will have to choose between her religion or her career. We came to Canada, called it home, because of its diversity and freedom of rights.<sup>217</sup>*

Naheed Nenshi (Former Mayor of Calgary), called on the committee to condemn “religiously bigoted laws across this country, including Bill 21 in Quebec,” arguing that a truly secular public square is not one that discriminates against some people, and questioning:

*When did our society become so weak that the thought of someone who dresses differently than us, who is not preaching, who is not converting, who is not grooming people into her religion, but simply dressing differently than us — How is our society so weak that that’s such a threat?<sup>218</sup>*

## Workplace Discrimination

Federal, provincial and territorial human rights laws protect individuals from discrimination by both public and private entities, including in the areas of employment, services, education and housing. These laws are considered quasi-constitutional, meaning that they prevail over other laws in the same jurisdiction unless otherwise stated in legislation.

For example, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* prohibits religious discrimination in areas of federal jurisdiction, including the Government of Canada, Crown corporations and federally regulated private businesses in the banking, communications and transportation sectors. People who have faced discrimination in these areas can register a complaint with the CHRC, which has the authority to investigate complaints and refer cases to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. The Tribunal hears evidence, decides whether discrimination has occurred, and may award remedies.<sup>219</sup> In 2021, 8% of all complaints accepted by the CHRC were related to religion.<sup>220</sup>

In testimony before the committee, the CHRC noted that it has received complaints of hundreds of cases of discrimination relating to anti-Muslim racism in the last five years, including situations in

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<sup>217</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 September 2022 (Furqan Abbassi, Member and Entrepreneur, Soul Brothers Pakistan).

<sup>218</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2023 (Naheed Nenshi, Former Mayor of Calgary As an Individual).

<sup>219</sup> On appeal, the Tribunal’s decisions may be reviewed by the Federal Court for reasonableness.

<sup>220</sup> Canadian Human Rights Commission, [By the numbers](#).



which Muslims were denied time and space to pray, profiled as a security risk, or insulted for their religious clothing or diet. Moreover, many feared repercussions if they raised concerns.<sup>221</sup>

Husein Panju (Chair, Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association) argued that workplace discrimination against Muslims is a systemic issue, rather than merely being the result of individual prejudices. He noted that consultations undertaken by his organization indicated “numerous accounts of discriminatory hiring practices, failure to provide basic religious accommodations and toxic workplace environments that make Muslim employees feel unwanted or unsafe,” including in the federal public service.<sup>222</sup>

Witnesses pointed to several components contributing to systemic discrimination in the context of employment, including the lack of recognition of professional degrees earned in other countries, and prejudice based on their appearance. Saïd Akjour explained that like many immigrants “my degrees aren’t recognized in the system of my present employer. I can’t advance in my career, my salary doesn’t reflect my qualifications, and I can’t get a position that does.”<sup>223</sup> While noting that people of other backgrounds are affected by this issue as well, Barbara Jackman agreed that this barrier can be a form of systemic Islamophobia.<sup>224</sup> She argued that a “standardized quick assessment process for new immigrants with common standards” should be in place to help address this issue.<sup>225</sup>

Nuzhat Jafri (Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women) also explained the importance of intersectionality in understanding workplace discrimination, noting that:

*Muslim women throughout Canada experience high levels of underemployment and unemployment compared with women of other faiths. They also have higher levels of education but barriers such as lack of Canadian experience, non-recognition of international credentials, and pervasive racism and Islamophobia have worsened their employment outcomes.”<sup>226</sup>*

Similarly, Jad El Tal (Director of Research and Policy, Canadian Arab Institute) explained some of the particular barriers facing Arab women, including being identified as Muslims based on their names alone, and therefore being subjected to stereotypes from the moment someone reads their résumé.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Human Rights Commission)

<sup>222</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Husein Panju, Chair, Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association).

<sup>223</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Saïd Akjour, as an individual).

<sup>224</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 March 2023 (Barbara Jackman, Lawyer, Jackman and Associates).

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 24 October 2022 (Nuzhat Jafri, Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women).

<sup>227</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Jad El Tal, Director of Research and Policy, Canadian Arab Institute).

During committee travel to Quebec, the committee heard that many highly qualified Muslim women with professional degrees are unable to find work in their field of study, due to both the direct effects of Bill 21, and a broader cultural shift that is giving license to workplace discrimination. For example, Nabila Daoudi explained that:

*It's hard for educated Muslim women to enter the labour market. We experience discrimination, stigmatization and restrictions instead of a review of our academic and professional competencies. I can simply and easily be disqualified from an internship or paid position just because I'm Muslim or because I wear Muslim-looking clothing. I earned a degree in finance in Morocco. I have a university degree. I worked as an intern for one month in Quebec City, but then all doors were closed to me. I had to adjust and train to become an educator.*<sup>228</sup>

Within the medical profession, Katherine Bullock (Lecturer, University of Toronto Mississauga) pointed to a 2017 University of Toronto survey of medical residents indicating that 47% experienced either discrimination or harassment, and that 60% of those who experienced discrimination were Muslim. She noted that although reporting mechanisms are theoretically in place, medical residents generally did not use them, fearing that they would be targeted or labeled as a troublemaker.<sup>229</sup>

The committee also heard about discrimination and cultural insensitivity within the legal profession. For example, during a visit to a mosque in September 2022, the committee heard about a woman at a major law firm being asked if she was meeting her husband for the first time at her wedding.

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<sup>228</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Nabila Daoudi).

<sup>229</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Katherine Bullock, Lecturer, University of Toronto Mississauga).

Several witnesses shared specific experiences of workplace discrimination, highlighting how pervasive Islamophobia can be in the employment context. As explained by Saïd Akjour:

*Everyone has a tale to tell about [discrimination in the workplace]. At my old job, I was talking to a Moroccan colleague who worked in another department. My boss passed by and said, “What are you plotting? Are you talking about bombs, about building a bomb?” I screwed up the courage to follow her into her office and told her, “You just can’t say that. What goes on between us is private. We were talking about something else.” Then she responded, “No, don’t take it that way. It was a joke.” Message received, but it wasn’t really a joke. You don’t laugh about those things, especially in a professional setting where there’s a hierarchy. She was my boss at the time of that incident.<sup>230</sup>*

In other contexts, Islamophobia is less blatant, but can lead to outcomes that are indicative of systemic bias. Monia Mazigh (Author, Human Rights Activist and Adjunct Research Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Carleton University) observed that discrimination is difficult to prove, particularly in the context of highly competitive employment competitions such as academic postings, but that very few women who wear the hijab teach at universities, and she believes this is due to discrimination.<sup>231</sup> Similarly, Mohamed Labidi (President, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City) observed that his workplace has approximately 400 federal employees, and that of the 20 team leaders, none are visible minorities or immigrants.<sup>232</sup>

To correct against these subtler forms of disadvantage and discrimination, the federal public service is required by the *Employment Equity Act* to put in place policies, practices and reasonable accommodations that ensure equitable representation of certain groups. Under the Act, the four designated groups are “women,” “Aboriginal peoples,” “persons with disabilities,” and “members of visible minorities.”<sup>233</sup> Husein Panju explained that these categorizations can mask intersectional aspects of discrimination, providing the example of data capturing discrimination against women and discrimination against Black people, but not the experience of Black women specifically.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, he observed that discrimination based on Islamophobia does not fit neatly within these categories.

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<sup>230</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Saïd Akjour, as an individual).

<sup>231</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 14 November 2022 (Monia Mazigh, Author, Human Rights Activist and Adjunct Research Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Carleton University).

<sup>232</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Mohamed Labidi, President, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City).

<sup>233</sup> [Employment Equity Act](#), (S.C. 1995, c. 44), s. 2.

<sup>234</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 21 November 2022 (Husein Panju, Chair, Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association).

The CHRC noted that it has repeatedly called for the *Employment Equity Act* to be modernized to better protect racialized people.<sup>235</sup> Other witnesses agreed with this recommendation.<sup>236</sup> Ibtissam Nkaili (Senior financial analyst, Export Development Canada) added that “diversity and inclusion are not just about hiring employees from racialized groups, but about making those employees feel valued and able to come to their jobs feeling like themselves with all of their identities and cultures, while feeling valued.”<sup>237</sup>

Some witnesses contended that the CHRC itself acts as a barrier to justice, arguing that complainants should be able to file directly with the Tribunal, bypassing the CHRC’s gatekeeping function. Noting that Ontario and B.C. have moved to this system, the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association recommended that the federal government phase-in a direct access model to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to support the transition.<sup>238</sup>

The CHRC stated that it “supports any steps designed to increase access to human rights justice in its full meaning, but it is not convinced the evidence from the direct access system of Ontario or B.C. shows they are any improvement over the commission screening model.”<sup>239</sup> Brian Smith (Senior Counsel, Legal Services Division, CHRC) observed that regardless of the model chosen, screening of cases will occur at some stage of the process, and additional resources can help ensure that this is performed in a manner that ensures timely access to justice. At the same time, he suggested that one advantage of the current model is that the CHRC is able to provide some supports to complainants to, for example, help them frame their issues at an early stage to meet legislative requirements, and participate alongside the complainant as a party before the Tribunal.<sup>240</sup> Moreover, in a written submission to the committee, the CHRC added that many complaints are resolved through its mediation service, a process that is often more economical and expeditious for complainants than proceeding to the Tribunal. Between 2017 and 2022, approximately 54% of complaints to the CHRC relating to Islamophobia in the employment context were settled through mediation.<sup>241</sup>

## Federal Correctional System

As documented in the committee’s June 2021 report, *Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons*, Muslims in federal penitentiaries often face difficulties exercising their right to freedom of religion, including in some cases being denied access to the Quran. In that report, the committee

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<sup>235</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 21 November 2022 (Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Human Rights Commission)

<sup>236</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 14 November 2022 (Samira Laouni, President – Director of C.O.R. and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week).

<sup>237</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Ibtissam Nkaili, Senior financial analyst, Export Development Canada).

<sup>238</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 21 November 2022 (Husein Panju, Chair, Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association)

<sup>239</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 21 November 2022 (Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Human Rights Commission).

<sup>240</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 21 November 2022 (Brian Smith, Senior Counsel, Legal Services Division, Canadian Human Rights Commission).

<sup>241</sup> RIDR, Briefs, [Canadian Human Rights Commission](#), Brief submitted to the committee, 16 December 2022.

noted that “in addition to being a Charter-protected right, faith and culture can play an important role in rehabilitation and reintegration.”<sup>242</sup>

During the committee’s present study, several witnesses raised concerns about the difficulty of obtaining religious accommodations and chaplaincy services for Muslims in federal penitentiaries. Adil Afzal (Senior policy and Islamophobia expert, Canadian Muslim Chaplain Organization) recounted his experience working in the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatchewan, which is largely used for federally sentenced persons with mental health issues who are deemed to be high-risk. Adil Afzal described the difficulty in obtaining religious accommodations for federally sentenced persons, often due to resistance from Correctional Service Canada staff. He explained that:

*They almost try and coerce you into saying, “You know what? Don’t approve this. The person is pretending. The person just wants a different meal...” They would have these conversations on the side to undermine accommodations.*

*Then we noticed that, slowly, our visiting time was getting harder to book. Many times, dealing with trying to get some policy changes for halal food was very difficult. You’d have to go through multiple meetings, and nothing would actually get done. It was a very frustrating process.<sup>243</sup>*

When appropriate religious accommodations are provided, the positive impact on an individual’s wellbeing and rehabilitation can be profound. Adil Afzal recounted meeting a woman with mental health issues who had not spoken a single word to anybody in three years, but was able to open up to him. She explained that years before, her Quran had been desecrated and thrown away, underscoring the fact that “her silence was based on a deep mistrust of the system.”<sup>244</sup>

Given the significance of these interactions, it is vital that chaplaincy services be properly resourced. The committee heard concerns that a 2013 change to the structure of the federal prison chaplaincy program has put Muslims and other faith communities at a disadvantage.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> RIDR, *Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons*, June 2021, pp. 84-85.

<sup>243</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 3 October 2022 (Adil Afzal, Senior policy and Islamophobia expert, Canadian Muslim Chaplain Organization).

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> RIDR, *Evidence*, 8 September 2022 (Omar Yaqub, Servant of Servants (ED), Islamic Family & Social Services Association).



However, Imam Michael Taylor outlined how the single national supplier model functions, noting that chaplaincy service levels for Muslims have increased since 2013, and that there are currently 18 qualified Muslim chaplains serving at federal institutions across the country.<sup>246</sup> He further explained that the chaplaincy program “is subject to ongoing review and is currently engaged in a feasibility study on all available service delivery models. This review is expected to be concluded in the near future.”<sup>247</sup>



Senator Yonah Martin speaks with Omar Yaqub of the Islamic Family & Social Services Association following public hearings in Edmonton.

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<sup>246</sup> Imam Michael Taylor, *Brief*, 20 March 2023.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*



## Conclusion

Islamophobia is a serious and growing problem in Canadian society. Widespread stereotypes and misinformation have laid the groundwork for various forms of discrimination, and have repeatedly culminated in horrific acts of hate. Regardless of the terminology used to describe this phenomenon, it urgently needs to be confronted. In recent years, Muslims in Canada have shown great resilience in the face of unprecedented violence and discrimination. However, for many survivors of violent Islamophobia, life will never be the same. The committee recalls, for example, the deadly vehicle attack in London, Ontario in 2021 that left a nine-year-old boy without his parents, sister, and grandmother.

Canadians have the right to practise their religion, and deserve to feel safe when doing so. The disturbing rise of violence and hatred stemming from Islamophobia is a trend that needs to be reversed. At the same time, laws, policies and practices that continue to systemically disadvantage Muslims must be addressed, both through specific legislative and policy changes, as well as broader cultural shifts.

The committee believes that urgent action is required to address the rise of Islamophobia. The 13 recommendations set out in this report reflect concerns that the committee heard from communities across Canada. While the federal government is the primary focus of these recommendations, the committee wishes to emphasize that it is the responsibility of all Canadians, politicians and legislatures to help build a society that is inclusive for all.

## APPENDIX A – Terminology

Prejudice, discrimination, and violence against Muslims are a significant and growing problem in Canadian society. This phenomenon – most commonly referred to as “Islamophobia” – manifests in different forms and is known by different names. Academics and witnesses with lived experience of this form of prejudice disagreed about the most suitable terminology to describe it.

The term “Islamophobia” dates to the early twentieth century, and began to be widely used in the late 1990s.<sup>248</sup> It has since been the subject of vigorous academic and public debate. Some scholars prefer terms such as “anti-Muslim racism,” which avoid the erroneous suggestion that this phenomenon is merely a phobia, lacking intention, organization or malice.<sup>249</sup> In testimony to the committee, several witnesses shared this concern and proposed alternative terms, including “anti-Muslim hate” and “anti-Muslim discrimination.”<sup>250</sup> Housseem Ben Lazreg (Professor of modern languages and cultural studies, University of Alberta) explained that “calling this a phobia suggests that this discrimination is solely a problem of individual bias, which obscures the structural and systemic production of anti-Muslim racism.”<sup>251</sup>

Other witnesses expressed similar discomfort with the term “Islamophobia,” arguing that it risks conflating racism with legitimate fear of certain interpretations of Islam,<sup>252</sup> or that it may be inadequate to capture the extreme consequences associated with it, including incidents of horrific violence.<sup>253</sup>

Despite these concerns, it became clear to the committee over the course of its study that “Islamophobia” is currently more widely used and better understood than the available alternatives. Witnesses such as Sameer Zuberi (Member of Parliament, Pierrefonds–Dollard) argued that it is critical to maintain the term “Islamophobia” considering its understood meaning in society.<sup>254</sup> Similarly, David Matas (Senior Legal Counsel, B’nai Brith Canada) argued that although other terms may be preferable, given the wide use and recognition of the term “Islamophobia,” it may be best to keep it while ensuring that it is appropriately defined.<sup>255</sup> He argued that the

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<sup>248</sup> Katherine Bullock (2017), “[Policy Background: Defining Islamophobia for a Canadian Context](#)”, Tessellate Institute; RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Nabila Yasmine Saidji, Collective for the fight and action against racism).

<sup>249</sup> Katherine Bullock (2017), “[Policy Background: Defining Islamophobia for a Canadian Context](#)”, Tessellate Institute; RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Dr. Neila Miled, Anti-Racism Advisor, Faculty of Medicine of the University of British Columbia, Office of Respectful Environments, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion).

<sup>250</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 22 September 2022 (Anver Saloojee, Interim Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion, Toronto Metropolitan University).

<sup>251</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 8 September 2022 (Housseem Ben Lazreg, Professor of modern languages and cultural studies, University of Alberta).

<sup>252</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 20 September 2022 (Rachad Antonius, Adjunct Professor, Department of Sociology, Université du Québec à Montréal).

<sup>253</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 7 September 2022 (Karim H. Karim, Chancellor’s Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University).

<sup>254</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2023 (Sameer Zuberi, Member of Parliament, Pierrefonds–Dollard).

<sup>255</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 13 February 2023 (David Matas, Senior Legal Counsel, B’nai Brith Canada).

definition of Islamophobia should provide examples of what it includes, and assert that it does not preclude reasoned criticism of various interpretations of Islam.<sup>256</sup>

Similarly, Jasmin Zine (Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University) evaluated the various terms used to describe this phenomenon. Professor Zine argued that the term “anti-Muslim racism” can be useful to describe the effects of Islamophobia on individuals, but that the term “anti-Muslim hate” can be problematic because it “reduces the phenomenon to something that occurs at an individual level... and doesn’t allow us to interrogate the systemic aspects of Islamophobia.”<sup>257</sup> Professor Zine argued that “Islamophobia” is an appropriate term to use as an overarching framework to understand the breadth of individual, ideological and systemic attitudes and behaviours, and that it should be defined to reflect the fact that it exists as “a system of oppression that is manifested in individual, ideological and systemic ways.”<sup>258</sup>

Canada’s anti-racism strategy 2019–2022 reflects many of these concerns, stating that Islamophobia:

*Includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level.*<sup>259</sup>

As explained by Amira Elghawaby (Canada’s Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia), this definition does not preclude criticism of Islam, and is effective because it reflects the fact that Islamophobia includes both individual acts of intolerance as well as systemic elements.<sup>260</sup>

The committee agrees that this definition effectively captures Islamophobia’s various elements at both the individual and systemic level, as well as attitudes and behaviours ranging from unconscious bias to violent acts of hatred.

This report will therefore use the term “Islamophobia” to refer to these various attitudes and behaviours, while acknowledging that other terms such as “anti-Muslim hate” and “anti-Muslim racism” may be equally appropriate in different contexts. Moreover, the committee wishes to emphasize that regardless of the term used to describe this phenomenon, it is the responsibility of all Canadians to confront it. Everyone deserves to live in a society that is free from prejudice, discrimination, and violence. While choice of terminology is important, it must not distract from

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Jasmin Zine, Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University).

<sup>258</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2023 (Jasmin Zine, Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University).

<sup>259</sup> Canadian Heritage, [Building a Foundation for Change: Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022](#).

<sup>260</sup> RIDR, [Evidence](#), 27 March 2023 (Amira Elghawaby, Canada’s Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia).

the urgent need to confront the very real hostility that Muslims regularly encounter in Canadian society.



Black Art Matters Director, poet and queer activist Nasra Adem, centre, and poet Timiro Mohamed, right, pose for a picture with, from left, senators [Paula Simons](#), [Mobina S. B. Jaffer](#) and [Salma Ataullahjan](#) at a public hearing in downtown Edmonton on Thursday, September 8, 2022.

## APPENDIX B – Witnesses

### Monday, June 13, 2022

Nusaiba Al-Azem, Lawyer, The National Council of Canadian Muslims

Robert Burley, Senior Director, Canada Centre for Community Engagement & Prevention of Violence, Public Safety Canada

Mustafa Farooq, Chief Executive Director, The National Council of Canadian Muslims

Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage

Daniel J. Kuhlen, Lawyer, The National Council of Canadian Muslims

Dominic Rochon, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, National Security and Cyber Security Branch, Public Safety Canada

Chad Westmacott, Director General, Community Safety, Corrections and Criminal Justice, Crime Prevention Branch, Public Safety Canada

### Monday, June 20, 2022

Amira Elghawaby, Director of Strategic Communications and Campaigns, Canadian Race Relations Foundation

Anver Emon, Professor of Law and History, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, as an Individual

Mohammed Hashim, Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation

Jasmin Zine, Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University, as an Individual

### Wednesday, September 7, 2022 (morning) – Vancouver, BC

Kashif Ahmed, Board Chairman, The National Council of Canadian Muslims

Hasan Alam, Co-Founder and Community Liaison, Islamophobia Legal Assistance Hotline

Tahzi Ali, Assistant Secretary, British Columbia Muslim Association Board of Women Council

Dr. Neila Miled, Anti-Racism Advisor, Faculty of Medicine of the University of British Columbia, Office of Respectful Environments, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Amy B. Sajoo, Scholar-in-Residence and Lecturer, School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University, as an Individual

**Wednesday, September 7, 2022 (afternoon) – Vancouver, BC**

Kasari Govender, Human Rights Commissioner, British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

Karim H. Karim, Chancellor's Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, as an Individual

Abisola Kehinde, Vice-President and Sister, Muslim Students' Association of the University of British Columbia

Rachna Singh, Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia for Surrey-Green Timbers and Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives, as an Individual

Tariq Tyab, Co-Founder, Foundation For A Path Forward

**Thursday, September 8, 2022 (morning) – Edmonton, AB**

Yasmeen Abu-Laban, Professor and Canada Research Chair in the Politics of Citizenship and Human Rights and Fellow, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, University of Alberta, as an Individual

Bashir Ahmed Mohamed, as an Individual

Jibril Ibrahim, Chairperson, Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton

Houssein Ben Lazreg, Professor of Modern Languages and cultural studies, University of Alberta, as an Individual

Rod Loyola, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Poet and Spoken Word Artist, as an Individual

Dunia Nur, President and Chief Executive Officer, African Canadian Civic Engagement Council

Said Omar, Alberta Advocacy Officer, The National Council of Canadian Muslims

Farha Shariff, Senior Advisor for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization, on behalf of the Dean's office, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, as an Individual

**Thursday, September 8, 2022 (afternoon) – Edmonton, AB**

Nasra Adem, Director at Black Art Matters, Poet, Artist and Queer Activist, as an Individual

Vernon Boldick, Promotions and Communications Coordinator, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society

Ibrahim Karidio, Engineer, City of Edmonton, as an Individual

Timiro Mohamed, Poet, as an Individual

Ibtissam Nkaili, Senior financial analyst, Export Development Canada, as an Individual

Temitope Oriola, Professor of criminology and sociology at the University of Alberta and president-elect, Canadian Sociological Association, as an Individual



Wati Rahmat, Founder and Director, Sisters Dialogue

Omar Yaqub, Servant of Servants (ED), Islamic Family and Social Services Association

**Tuesday, September 20, 2022 – Quebec City, QC**

Laïla Aitoumasste, Coordinator, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City

Saïd Akjour, as an Individual

Rachad Antonius, Adjunct Professor, Department of Sociology, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), as an Individual

Arroun Arafat Mfochivé Badiane, President, Muslim Students' Association of Laval University

Boufeldja Benabdallah, Co-founder and Spokesperson, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City

Nabila Daoudi, as an Individual

Mohamad El Hafid, as an Individual

Maxim Fortin, Quebec City Chapter Coordinator, Ligue des droits et libertés

Mohamed Labidi, President, Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City

Yasser Lahlou, Muslim Students' Association of the University of Montreal

Louis-Philippe Lampron, Full Professor in Rights and Freedoms, Researcher for the CRIDAQ and Co-spokesperson for GEDEL, Faculty of Law, Laval University, as an Individual

Samer Majzoub, President, Canadian Muslim Forum

Thérèse Sagna, Board Member, Quebec Women's Federation

Nabila Yasmine Saidji, Collective for the fight and action against racism

Nadège Rosine Toguem, Collective for the fight and action against racism

**Wednesday, September 21, 2022 – Toronto, ON**

Furqan Abbassi, Member and Entrepreneur, Soul Brothers Pakistan

Dr. Mohammad Iqbal Al-Nadvi, Chairman, Canadian Council of Imams

Heather Fenyes, Board Chair, Centus Citizenship Education Foundation

David Fisher, Executive Director, Centus Citizenship Education Foundation

Taha Ghayyur, Member, Canadian Council of Imams

Rizwana Kaderdina, Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario

Rabia Khokhar, Teacher and Equity and Education Consultant, as an Individual

Dr. Arfeen Malick, Mental Health Director, Muslim Medical Association of Canada

Refaat Mohamed, President, Canadian Council of Imams  
Omar Zia, Educator, Muslim Educators Network of Ontario

**Thursday, September 22, 2022 (morning) – Toronto, ON**

Katherine Bullock, Lecturer, University of Toronto Mississauga, as an Individual  
Troy Jackson, Co-Founder and President, Writer and Performer, El-Tawhid Juma Circle  
El-Farouk Khaki, Co-Founder, El-Tawhid Juma Circle and Founder of Salaam Queer Muslim Community, Co-Founder of The Canadian Muslim Union, Co-Founder of the Muslim AIDS Project, Founding Member of the Muslim Lawyers' Association  
Sarah Khetty, Director of Marketing, Zabiha Halal  
Shabnees Siwjee, At-Large Director, Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of Toronto  
Hamid Slimi, President, Muslim Council of Peel

**Thursday, September 22, 2022 (afternoon) – Toronto, ON**

Adem Ali, Director of Programs, Somali Canadian Association of Etobicoke  
Nouman Ashraf, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto, as an Individual  
Shaykh Yusuf Badat, Imam, Islamic Foundation of Toronto  
Jad El Tal, Director of Research and Policy, Canadian Arab Institute  
Reyhana Patel, Director of Communications and Government Relations, Islamic Relief Canada  
Anver Saloojee, Interim Vice-President, Equity and Community Inclusion, Toronto Metropolitan University, as an Individual

**Monday, October 3, 2022**

Amina Abawajy, Education Advisor, Human Rights and Equity Services, Dalhousie University, as an Individual  
Adil Afzal, Senior policy and islamophobia expert, Canadian Muslim Chaplain Organization (CMCO)  
Mostafa Hanout, Vice-Chairman, Sabeel Muslim Youth and Community Centre  
Abdal Khan, President, Moncton Muslim Association  
Imam Abdallah Yousri, Executive Director, Ummah Mosque and Community Centre

**Monday, October 24, 2022**

Ali Abukar, Chief Executive Officer, Saskatoon Open Door Society  
Fatimah Jackson-Best, Assistant Professor, Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact, McMaster University, as an Individual

Nuzhat Jafri, Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women

Maryam Khan, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, as an Individual

Ali Lakhani, Editor, Sacred Web

Dr. Javeed Sukhera, Chief of Psychiatry, Hartford Hospital, as an Individual

### **Monday, October 31, 2022**

Faheem Affan, Assistant National Secretary Public Relations and Director Parliamentary Friends Association, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada

Citra Ahmed, Social Services Coordinator, Al Rashid Mosque, Edmonton, as an Individual

Evan Balgord, Executive Director Canadian, Anti-Hate Network

Yasmin Jiwani, Professor, Department of Communication Studies, Concordia University, as an Individual

Omar Mouallem, Author, Journalist and Filmmaker, as an Individual

Leigh Naturkach, Executive Director, Mosaic Institute

### **Monday, November 14, 2022**

Mark Flynn, Assistant Commissioner, Federal Policing, National Security and Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Nadine Huggins, Chief Human Resources Officer, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Samira Laouni, President - Director of C.O.R. (Communication, ouverture, rapprochement interculturel) and President and Co-Founder, Muslim Awareness Week, as an Individual

Monia Mazigh, Author, Human Rights Activist and Adjunct Research Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Carleton University, as an Individual

Chad Westmacott, Director General, Community Safety, Corrections and Criminal Justice, Public Safety Canada

### **Monday, November 21, 2022**

François Boileau, Ombudsperson, Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsperson

Marcella Daye, Senior Policy Advisor, Policy, Research and International Relations Division, Canadian Human Rights Commission

Marie-Claude Landry, Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Human Rights Commission

Husein Panju, Chair, Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association

Haroon Siddiqui, Journalist and Editor Emeritus, Toronto Star, as an Individual

Brian Smith, Senior Counsel, Legal Services Division, Canadian Human Rights Commission

Nabil Sultan, Director of Communications & Community Engagement, Muslim Association of Canada

**Monday, November 28, 2022**

Ahmad Attia, Member of the Peel Police Services Board and Chief Executive Officer of Incisive Strategy, as an Individual

Carl Desmarais, Director General, Enforcement, Canada Border Services Agency

Nicole Giles, Deputy Director, Policy and Strategic Partnerships, Canadian Security Intelligence Service

Gloria Haché, Acting Vice-President, Human Resources Branch, Canada Border Services Agency

Sharmila Khare, Director General, Charities Directorate, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency

Scott Millar, Vice-President, Strategic Policy Branch, Canada Border Services Agency

Newton Shortliffe, Assistant Director, Collection, Canadian Security Intelligence Service

Geoff Trueman, Assistant Commissioner, Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency

**Monday, February 6, 2023**

Fatima Coovadia, Commissioner, Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, as an Individual

Barbara Perry, Professor and Director, Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Ontario Tech University, as an Individual

Shahina Siddiqui, Co-Founder and Volunteer Executive Director, Islamic Social Services Association, as an Individual

Jasmin Zine, Professor of Sociology, Religion and Culture, Muslim Studies Option, Wilfrid Laurier University, as an Individual

**Monday, February 13, 2023**

Terrance S. Carter, Lawyer, Carters Professional Corporation, as an Individual

Iqra Khalid, Member of Parliament, Mississauga—Erin Mills

David Matas, Senior Legal Counsel, National Office, B'Nai Brith Canada

Michael Mostyn, Chief Executive Officer, National Office, B'Nai Brith Canada

Naheed Nenshi, Former Mayor of Calgary, as an Individual

Richard Robertson, Manager, Research Department, National Office, B'Nai Brith Canada

Sameer Zuberi, Member of Parliament, Pierrefonds—Dollard

**Monday, March 6, 2023**

Karim Elabed, Imam of Mosquée de Lévis, Association des musulmanes et musulmans du Grand Lévis, as an Individual

Rabia Khedr, Chief Executive Officer, DEEN (Disability Empowerment Equality Network) Support Services and Board Member, Federation of Muslim Women, as an Individual

Pierre-Paul Noreau, President, Conseil de presse du Québec

Michael Taylor, Imam, as an Individual

**Monday, March 20, 2023**

Fahad Ahmad, Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University, as an Individual

Barbara Jackman, Lawyer, Jackman and Associates, as an Individual

Thomas Juneau, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, as an Individual

Tim McSorley, National Coordinator International, Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

Abdul Nakua, Executive Member, Muslim Association of Canada

**Monday, March 27, 2023**

Gaveen Cadotte, Assistant Deputy Minister, Anti-Racism Strategy and Action Plan on Combatting Hate Sector Canadian Heritage

John Davies, Executive Director, NSIRA Secretariat, National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA)

The Honourable Marie Deschamps, Chair, National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA)

Amira Elghawaby, Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia, as an Individual

Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Canadian Heritage

Mala Khanna, Associate Deputy Minister, Canadian Heritage

Foluke Laosebikan, Member, National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA)

## APPENDIX C – Fact Finding Visits and Outreach Activity

**Tuesday, September 6, 2022**

[Masjid Al-Salaam Mosque and Education Centre](#) (Vancouver, BC)

**Thursday, September 8, 2022**

[Al Rashid Mosque](#) (Edmonton, AB)

**Monday, September 19, 2022**

[Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec](#) (Quebec City, QC)

**Wednesday, September 21, 2022**

[Clarkson Secondary School](#) - outreach activity (Mississauga, ON)

[ISNA \(Islamic Society of North America\) Canada](#) (Mississauga, ON)

**Thursday, September 22, 2022**

[Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of Toronto \(ISIJ\)](#) - Jaffari Islamic Centre (JIC) (Toronto, ON)



## APPENDIX D – Briefs and Supplementary Evidence

Al Rashid Mosque, Edmonton, [Brief](#), November 9, 2022

B'nai Brith Canada, [Brief](#), February 13, 2023

Canada Revenue Agency, [Follow-up to testimony](#), January 9, 2023

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Shaun Poulter), [Reply Letter](#), March 3, 2023

Canadian Heritage, [Follow-up to testimony](#), April 20, 2023

Canadian Human Rights Commission, [Brief](#), December 19, 2022

Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council, [Brief](#), January 5, 2023

Mohamad El Hafid, [Brief](#), October 24, 2022

Foundation For A Path Forward (Yusuf Siraj), [Brief and Addendum](#), September 7 and October 13, 2022

Islamic Relief Canada, [Brief](#), September 20, 2022

Meta Platforms, Inc., [Brief](#), December 7, 2022

National NewsMedia Council (John Fraser), [Brief](#), March 14, 2023

National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (the Honourable Marie Deschamps), [Follow-up to testimony](#), April 4, 2023

Public Safety Canada (Chad Westmacott), [Follow-up to testimony](#), September 8, 2022

Sacred Web (Ali Lakhani), [Follow-up to testimony](#), December 30, 2022

Michael Taylor, Imam, [Follow-up to testimony](#), March 20, 2023

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (Amad Al Qadi), [Follow-up to testimony](#), October 26, 2022

Zabiha Halal (Sarah Khetty), [Brief](#), September 22, 2022

Beisan Zubi, [Brief](#), March 14, 2023

## APPENDIX E – Exhibits

Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec, *Xenophobic and Notably Islamophobic Acts of Hate: Research carried out across Quebec (Summary)*, August 2019, full study available (in French) on the Website of the Commission: [www.cdpcj.qc.ca](http://www.cdpcj.qc.ca)

Catherine Dauvergne (2020), “Gendering Islamophobia to better understand immigration laws”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46:12, 2569-2584, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1561066

Haroon Siddiqui (2022), “Muslims and the Media: A uniquely shameful chapter”, Literary Review of Canada

Jasmin Zine (2022), “The Canadian Islamophobia Industry: Mapping Islamophobia’s Ecosystem in the Great White North”, Islamophobia Studies Center, Berkely, California

Katherine Bullock (2017), “Policy Backgrounder: Defining Islamophobia for a Canadian Context”, Tessellate Institute



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