



CANADIAN MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

February 6, 2024

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Department of Finance Canada
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VIA Email:
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The Honourable Kamal Khera
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Dear Minister Freeland and Minister Khera,

Subject: Pre-Budget Consultation Submission – Let's Talk Budget 2024

As representatives of the Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC), we write to contribute our perspectives to the Let's Talk Budget 2024 initiative.

CMPAC stands as a representative for the Muslim community across Canada, advocating for their interests and well-being. Dedicated to addressing the needs of Muslim Canadians amidst persistent structural Islamophobia, CMPAC tirelessly cultivates an inclusive and equitable environment by tackling discrimination, championing diversity, and participating in initiatives that bolster our nation's social cohesion. Aligning with the government's focus on fostering job creation and economic prosperity, CMPAC emphasizes the pivotal role its initiatives play in nurturing a thriving and diverse Canadian workforce.

The significance of our endeavors is underscored by recent census data, which illuminates the burgeoning presence of the Muslim community in Canada. Between 2001 and 2021, Muslims in Canada surged from 2% to nearly 4.9% of the overall population, making Islam the second most commonly reported religion in the country. This demographic shift underscores the imperative of dismantling systemic barriers like Islamophobia, which impede the full integration of Muslim Canadians into the workforce, despite their commendable levels of education. By combatting Islamophobia, we not only champion principles of equity and inclusion but also unlock the latent potential of a substantial segment of our populace, thereby fostering economic growth and prosperity for all.



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Pre-Budget Recommendations Summary

Commencing with the imperative of safeguarding the well-being of Muslim communities, our recommendations encompass a comprehensive array of measures aimed at fostering security, combatting discrimination, and promoting inclusivity across Canada. These include:

1. Fighting Discrimination and Islamophobia Across Government;
2. Ensuring Physical Security for Muslim Institutions;
3. Grants and Support for Education to Counter Islamophobia;
4. Enhanced Government Accountability and Transparency in Security Measures (RAD, NIRA and CBSA);
5. Expansion of the office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia (OSRCI); and
6. Providing Comprehensive Support for Palestinians in Gaza.

Recommendation No. 1 - Fighting Discrimination and Islamophobia Across Government

Addressing discrimination and Islamophobia across government agencies is paramount as the cornerstone of our pre-budget recommendations. We propose the inclusion of a dedicated budgetary allocation to establish programs aimed at preventing discrimination and Islamophobia within various government entities, emphasizing the importance of fostering a culture of inclusivity and diversity. Our proposal encompasses initiatives such as mandatory training programs on cultural sensitivity, robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and the development of inclusive policies. Collaboration with Muslim organizations is also essential in this endeavor, as it allows us to leverage their expertise and networks to ensure our efforts are effective and culturally sensitive, fostering inclusivity and solidarity in our fight against discrimination. Specifically, we recommend the following:

1. Training Programs on Cultural Sensitivity: Allocate funds for mandatory training programs on cultural sensitivity and anti-discrimination for government employees. This will contribute to creating a more inclusive work environment and enhance understanding of diverse communities.
2. Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms: Implement mechanisms for monitoring and reporting incidents of discrimination within government agencies. This will enable timely intervention and the development of responsive policies to address emerging challenges.
3. Inclusive Policies: Advocate for the development and implementation of inclusive policies that explicitly address discrimination against specific communities, including Palestinians, and promote a fair and equitable treatment of all individuals.



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4. Collaborate with Muslim Organizations: To comprehensively address structural Islamophobia within government institutions, it is vital to collaborate closely with Muslim organizations. By engaging these organizations, we can tap into their expertise, lived experiences, and networks to develop targeted strategies and policies. Collaboration will ensure that the initiatives put forth are not only effective but also culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of Muslim communities. Moreover, partnering with Muslim organizations fosters trust and fosters a sense of ownership and participation in the process of combating Islamophobia. This collaborative approach strengthens solidarity and amplifies voices in advocating for systemic change.

Recommendation No. 2 - Ensuring Physical Security for Muslim Institutions & Combat Online Hate

In light of the rising challenges and threats faced by Muslim communities, we advocate for targeted budget allocations dedicated to fortifying the security measures of mosques, community centers, schools, and other vulnerable institutions integral to the Islamic faith. Funding resources should be directed toward implementing safety protocols, training security personnel, and addressing online hate.

1. Allocation for Enhanced Security Measures: To fortify these vital community hubs, we propose the allocation of funding resources directed at implementing comprehensive safety protocols. This includes the deployment of cutting-edge security technologies, bolstering physical infrastructure, and the development of emergency response plans tailored to the unique needs of Islamic institutions.
2. Training Security Personnel: Recognizing the specific security challenges faced by Muslim institutions, a portion of the budget should be earmarked for specialized training programs for security personnel. This targeted training will ensure that security staff are well-equipped to handle the unique sensitivities and potential risks associated with safeguarding Muslim community spaces.
3. Addressing Online Hate: Furthermore, it's imperative to acknowledge the insidious nature of online hate targeting Muslims, which has seen a concerning rise in recent years, exacerbated by the proliferation of divisive narratives and misinformation. Particularly, the escalation of tensions surrounding the Palestine and Israel conflict has catalyzed a surge in online hate directed towards Muslims, amplifying existing prejudices and fueling discriminatory attitudes. Therefore, alongside physical security measures, resources should also be allocated towards initiatives aimed at combatting online hate speech, promoting digital literacy, and fostering a culture of tolerance and inclusivity in online spaces. By addressing both physical and digital security concerns, we can create a more resilient and supportive environment for Muslim communities to thrive in Canada.



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Recommendation No. 3 - Grants and Support for Awareness Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Transitioning to the critical realm of public awareness, we advocate for the allocation of budgetary resources to support grants and programs aimed at countering Islamophobia through awareness initiatives. These programs should emphasize the dissemination of accurate information, mutual understanding, and the active challenge of stereotypes against Muslim communities. The urgency of incorporating Palestine awareness and anti-Palestine racism awareness within these initiatives is underscored by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the struggles currently faced by Palestinians. These challenges have heightened the need for a more comprehensive approach addressing interconnected issues affecting the Muslim community today, fostering empathy and understanding.

Moreover, it is essential to integrate awareness about Islamophobia into these programs, given the alarming rise in online hate and discriminatory incidents against Muslims, including those exacerbated by the Palestine issue. Comprehensive awareness initiatives must equip individuals with the knowledge and tools to recognize, challenge, and ultimately dismantle Islamophobic attitudes and behaviors. By fostering a culture of empathy, inclusivity, and respect, these efforts empower individuals to combat prejudice and pave the way for a more cohesive celebration of the contributions of all its members. This strategic allocation of funds for educational programs serves as a transformative step toward building a society that values and understands the rich tapestry of Muslim experiences in Canada.

Recommendation No. 4 - Enhancing Government Accountability and Transparency in Security Measures (RAD, NIRA, CBSA)

Building on our earlier submissions to the Department of Finance dated August 1, 2023 and August 18, 2023, respectively, regarding concerns with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), CMPAC underscores the necessity for a strategic realignment of resources to bolster accountability and transparency within government security measures. Specifically, we advocate for the dismantling of the Review and Analysis Division within the CRA to streamline operations and enhance efficiency. Redirecting resources from this division towards the enhancement of the National Intelligence Review Agency (NIRA) will reinforce intelligence review processes and strengthen oversight capabilities.

This realignment aligns with CMPAC's commitment to ensuring that government agencies responsible for intelligence review operate with utmost efficacy, maintaining transparency and upholding accountability principles. Moreover, it contributes to a more robust framework prioritizing the protection of national interests while fostering openness and accountability in government operations.



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Recognizing the interconnected nature of security, oversight, and economic prosperity, CMPAC also emphasizes the need for enhanced oversight mechanisms within law enforcement agencies, such as the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA). While the introduction of the Public Complaints and Review Commission (PCRC) is a step towards accountability, amendments are necessary to ensure its effectiveness, especially concerning systemic complaints and accountability for CBSA actions. To strengthen the PCRC, facilitating third-party complaints and addressing systemic issues are paramount. Additionally, ensuring independent investigations, providing recourse and redress, and ensuring judicial recourse are essential for bolstering the PCRC's mandate for transparency, accountability, and safeguarding civil liberties.

Additionally, we advocate addressing structural biases within the CBSA that disproportionately impact Muslim communities, perpetuating structural Islamophobia. CMPAC actively advocates for reforms promoting fairness, accountability, and transparency within the CBSA, including interventions in cases of unjust denial of entry and changes in agents' powers. Parallel efforts to enhance the NIRA will strengthen intelligence review processes, contributing to a more effective and transparent system.

By advocating for comprehensive measures to enhance government accountability, transparency, and oversight, CMPAC aims to foster a safer and more equitable society conducive to economic prosperity. By addressing systemic and structural biases within agencies like the CRA, NIRA, and CBSA, promoting fairness, and strengthening oversight mechanisms, we take crucial steps toward building a society where economic opportunities are accessible to all.

Recommendation No. 5 - Expansion of the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia (OSRCI)

In furtherance of the aforementioned mission, we acknowledge the government's positive step towards fighting Islamophobia through the establishment of the Office of Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia. The office's mandate includes providing guidance to the government, informing policy development, tracking incidents of anti-Muslim hatred, promoting public education, and engaging with diverse stakeholders.

While recognizing the significance of this endeavor, we strongly advocate for a substantial increase in the budget assigned to OSRCI, accompanied by the strategic expansion of its personnel. Specifically, we request the following:



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1. Increased Budget Allocation:

Augmenting the financial resources of OSRCI is imperative to facilitate more impactful initiatives. This enhanced budget will empower the office to develop and implement comprehensive programs that not only address the immediate challenges of Islamophobia but also contribute to the dismantling of its structural roots. Specific areas of focus for budget allocation would include:

- (a) Community Engagement Specialists: Introduce dedicated community engagement specialists who can liaise directly with diverse Muslim communities. These specialists will facilitate a two-way dialogue, ensuring that the office is attuned to the nuanced challenges faced by different groups and can tailor its initiatives accordingly.
- (b) Public Awareness Coordinators: Hire public awareness coordinators to design and implement awareness initiatives, including workshops, training programs, and awareness campaigns. These coordinators will work in collaboration with schools, workplaces, and law enforcement agencies to foster a deeper understanding of Islam and counteract prevailing stereotypes.
- (c) Research Analysts: Strengthen the research and data collection arm of the office by hiring additional research analysts. This team will contribute to a more robust understanding of Islamophobia trends, enabling evidence-based policy development and targeted interventions.
- (d) Victim Support Specialists: Expand the team of victim support specialists to provide comprehensive assistance to those affected by Islamophobia. This includes legal support, counseling services, and assistance in accessing community resources.
- (e) Collaboration and Outreach Coordinators: Introduce collaboration and outreach coordinators to enhance partnerships with various stakeholders, including community leaders, civil society organizations, and educational institutions. These coordinators will facilitate collaborative efforts to combat Islamophobia effectively.

- 2. Strategic Expansion of Personnel: In light of the heightened budget allocation, it is also imperative to address the pressing need for an expansion of personnel within the OSRCI. It is important to enable OSRCI to contract subject matter experts and specialized research institutes to provide comprehensive and deep insights into areas of interest that relate to Islamophobia and identifying the needs of the Muslim community.



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The recent surge in hate and Islamophobic incidents, particularly in the aftermath of the Israel-Gaza conflict, underscores the critical importance of enhancing the office's capabilities. The escalating instances of discrimination and bias against Muslim Canadians demand a proactive and comprehensive response. By increasing staffing levels, the OSRCI can better navigate the complexities of the current socio-political landscape, ensuring a swift and effective response to the growing challenges posed by Islamophobia. This strategic expansion is not only timely but essential in mitigating the adverse impacts of these incidents on the well-being and security of the Muslim Canadian community.

In summary, enhancing the effectiveness of the OSRCI requires a twofold approach involving both increased budget allocation and expanded personnel. The allocation of adequate funding within the budget is essential to support the capacity-building efforts of the OSRCI in hiring or contracting advisors and subject matter experts, as well as facilitating training programs and skill development initiatives for OSRCI staff. By earmarking resources specifically for this purpose, the government can recruit qualified professionals, engage external experts from research institutions and relevant organizations, and establish partnerships with academic institutions, think tanks, and civil society organizations. This strategic allocation of resources enables OSRCI to tap into specialized knowledge and expertise, enhancing its effectiveness in combating Islamophobia and promoting inclusivity in Canada. This investment will also signify a commitment to systemic change, providing resources for dedicated specialists and comprehensive programs to address immediate challenges and dismantle structural roots of Islamophobia.

Recommendation No. 6 - Providing Comprehensive Support to Palestinians

Amidst the enduring humanitarian crisis faced by Palestinian families, our call for action within the Canadian budget takes on an urgent and substantive tone. Our recommendations encapsulate three crucial facets:

1. Relief for Palestinian Families Immigrating to Canada: Recognizing the acute hardships faced by Palestinian families, we advocate for targeted budgetary relief aimed at facilitating their successful integration into Canadian society. This relief encompasses financial assistance, housing support, and specialized community programs, crucial for ensuring a seamless transition and establishing a firm foundation for their resettlement.
2. Sustained Support for UNRWA: Sustained Support for UNRWA: Understanding the indispensable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in providing essential services to Palestinian refugees, we vehemently endorse not only continued but increased financial support to bolster UNRWA's operations. This includes funding for



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education, healthcare, and humanitarian aid, which are pivotal components in rebuilding and stabilizing conflict-affected communities.

3. Substantial Contributions to Rebuilding Gaza: In recognition of the dire situation in Gaza, we urge the allocation of substantial contributions within the Canadian budget for the purpose of rebuilding essential infrastructure, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. This strategic investment is essential to uplift the living conditions of the population, fostering resilience and stability in the aftermath of conflict.
4. Discontinuation of Military, Security, and Logistic Support in Budgetary Allocations: In alignment with our unwavering commitment to peace and human rights, we strongly assert that Canada should completely cease budgetary allocations towards military, security, and logistic support for Israel. By refraining from financially contributing to any form of military assistance, Canada can redirect these funds towards initiatives that promote diplomatic solutions, humanitarian aid, and the well-being of affected communities. This strategic reallocation underscores our dedication to utilizing budgetary resources to foster a peaceful resolution and prioritize the promotion of human rights in the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Building Inclusive Governance: Combatting Islamophobia for Economic Prosperity

In advancing our recommendations, CMPAC emphasizes the critical role of inclusive governance in addressing Islamophobia and fostering economic prosperity. By advocating for measures that enhance transparency, accountability, and equitable resource allocation, we aim to strengthen public trust in governmental institutions while addressing systemic challenges faced by diverse communities across Canada. Our recommendations are rooted in the belief that effective governance not only promotes social cohesion but also creates an environment conducive to economic growth and prosperity, particularly for Muslim communities.

Our six key recommendations work in tandem to achieve these goals:

1. Job Creation: By bolstering governmental initiatives, we aim to instill public confidence in policy implementation, thereby creating an environment conducive to job creation and economic growth. Trust in transparent governance encourages citizen engagement and support for governmental efforts, contributing to a safer and more prosperous society.
2. Investor Confidence: Accountability within governmental systems enhances investor confidence, attracting both domestic and foreign investments that stimulate economic growth. Businesses thrive in environments where policies are effectively implemented and instances of misconduct are swiftly addressed, fostering a positive economic climate nationally and internationally.



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3. Social Stability: Addressing instances of injustice through governmental initiatives is essential for maintaining social stability. By rectifying systemic inequalities and promoting fairness, we create a more stable society in which businesses can operate efficiently, contributing to economic growth and prosperity.
4. Resource Allocation: Efficient use of public resources is integral to a well-functioning economy. Our advocacy for effective governmental initiatives ensures that budgetary allocations to various sectors are optimized, promoting fiscal responsibility and contributing to overall economic betterment for all Canadians.

By integrating these economic perspectives into our recommendations, we not only strengthen accountability within governmental institutions but also underline their positive impact on job creation, investor confidence, social stability, and responsible resource allocation. This initiative aligns seamlessly with the government's focus on economic prosperity and societal well-being, embodying a commitment to building a prosperous and equitable society that addresses the challenges of Islamophobia.

In closing, we extend our gratitude for engaging with Canadians through the Let's Talk Budget 2024 initiative. Grounded in our collective commitment, the recommendations put forth are geared towards creating a more inclusive and secure environment for all Canadians, with a specific focus on addressing the challenges faced by Muslim communities in combatting Islamophobia. We sincerely appreciate your consideration of our submissions and eagerly anticipate further collaboration. Recognizing that an open and inclusive dialogue is fundamental, we believe it is key to shaping policies that resonate with the diverse needs and aspirations of our vibrant nation. Your ongoing commitment to understanding and addressing the issues of Islamophobia is pivotal in shaping a future where every Canadian feels valued, protected, and included, regardless of their background.

Sincerely,

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