



CANADIAN MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

CMPAC's Assessment of Canada's [Budget 2024](#)

On February 6, 2024, the Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC) submitted a comprehensive [proposal](#) with key recommendations towards the 2024 Canadian Federal Budget to address the needs and concerns of the Muslim community in Canada. Such proposals encompassed various areas such as combating discrimination, enhancing security for Muslim institutions, and providing support for Palestinians, among others. In response to the official Canada's Budget 2024 released on April 16, 2024, CMPAC has conducted a thorough assessment, comparing the budget's provisions with its original submission. This detailed comparison aims to evaluate the extent of alignment between the government's budget and CMPAC's proposals, as well as its effectiveness in addressing the critical issues facing the Muslim community.

Summary of CMPAC's Original Proposal and Executive Summary:

CMPAC's original submission emphasized several key recommendations aimed at fostering inclusivity, combating discrimination, and supporting Muslim communities across Canada.

These recommendations included:

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
5. Expansion of the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia
6. Providing Comprehensive Support for Palestinians

In summary, Canada's Budget 2024 reflects partial alignment with CMPAC's recommendations. While some initiatives show progress, others fall short of fully addressing the needs and concerns of the Muslim community. The budget succeeded in increasing funds to the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia (OSRCI). However, it fell short of explicitly committing to address Islamophobia across government, or clearly allocate funding for education initiatives that combat Islamophobia. Furthermore, the budget did not tackle enhancing accountability and transparency within government security agencies, and it did not commit to providing adequate support for Palestinians in the occupied lands or the ones relocating to Canada. The inclusion of additional proposals in the budget, including the introduction of alternative financial products for Muslims and eradicating forced labour, highlight areas of interest to the Muslim community but warrant further elaboration and evaluation to be considered a meaningful initiative. Moving forward, CMPAC will continue to advocate for comprehensive support for Muslim communities and targeted measures to combat discrimination, Islamophobia, and international human rights abuses.

1. Fighting Discrimination and Islamophobia Across Government:

In its original submission, CMPAC advocated for dedicated budgetary allocations to establish programs aimed at preventing discrimination and Islamophobia within various government entities. These proposals included mandatory training programs on cultural sensitivity, robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and the development of inclusive policies. However, the budget response, while including funding to support the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia, falls short of fully addressing CMPAC's broader recommendations for systemic changes across all government agencies. While the allocation towards the Special Representative is a positive step, it does not encompass the comprehensive approach proposed by CMPAC. Therefore, the budget response lacks the depth and breadth necessary to fully combat discrimination and Islamophobia across government agencies.

2. Ensuring Physical Security for Muslim Institutions:

In its original submission, CMPAC emphasized the critical need for enhanced security measures for mosques, community centres, schools, and other institutions integral to the Islamic faith. These measures were proposed to mitigate the risks of potential hate crimes and ensure the safety of Muslim communities. However, while the budget allocates additional funding to combat hate crimes and enhance security for *communities at risk*, it is not clear if this funding will be adequate to address the escalating security concerns of Muslim institutions.

The urgent imperative to prioritize the safety of Muslim institutions stems from the longstanding and escalating threat landscape faced by the Muslim community in Canada. Pre-existing instances of Islamophobic incidents, hate crimes, discrimination, anti-Palestinian racism, and heightened tensions have been compounded by recent events, amplifying the need for heightened security measures. This underscores the critical necessity to allocate resources explicitly designated for fortifying the physical security of mosques and other Muslim gathering places. Given the distinct challenges and risks encountered by these institutions, such specifically targeted allocation of resources is imperative to effectively address their security needs.

Without clear directives or earmarked resources for bolstering the physical security of mosques and other Muslim gathering places, the effectiveness of this funding in addressing the security needs of the Muslim community remains uncertain. As such, the budget response falls short of fully addressing the recommendations outlined by CMPAC. Therefore, CMPAC maintains that further clarification and direct action are necessary to ensure the safety and security of Muslim institutions in Canada.

3. Grants and Support for Education to Counter Islamophobia:

In its original submission, CMPAC emphasized the importance of grants and support for education initiatives aimed at countering Islamophobia. These initiatives were proposed to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and promote understanding of Muslim communities. However, there is a notable absence of explicit mention of grants or support for education initiatives to counter Islamophobia in the budget.

CMPAC's recommendation for grants and support for education initiatives was grounded in the understanding that fostering greater awareness and understanding is crucial in combatting Islamophobia and promoting inclusivity. By investing in educational programs, the government could have taken proactive steps to address discrimination / racism and promote tolerance within Canadian society.

The absence of explicit provisions for grants or support for education initiatives to counter Islamophobia in the budget is concerning and represents a missed opportunity to address a critical issue facing the Muslim community in Canada. CMPAC firmly believes that investing in education in

collaboration with mainstream Muslim organizations is essential in combatting Islamophobia and fostering a more inclusive society. Therefore, CMPAC maintains that additional measures, specifically targeted at educational initiatives, are necessary to effectively address Islamophobia and promote understanding and tolerance within Canadian society.

4. Enhanced Government Accountability and Transparency in Security Measures:

In its original submission, CMPAC highlighted the critical need for enhancing accountability and transparency within government security agencies. Specific attention was drawn towards reforms within agencies like the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), aimed at addressing systemic biases and promoting fairness in their operations. However, the budget does not provide specific measures to enhance government accountability and transparency in security measures, particularly within agencies like CBSA.

CMPAC's recommendation for enhanced government accountability and transparency was rooted in the belief that ensuring oversight and fairness within security agencies is essential in upholding civil liberties and preventing discrimination. By advocating for reforms within agencies like CBSA, CMPAC aimed to address systemic biases and promote equitable treatment for all individuals.

The lack of specific provisions to enhance government accountability and transparency in security measures, especially within agencies like CBSA, is disappointing and again represents a missed opportunity to address systemic issues within Canada's security apparatus. CMPAC firmly believes that ensuring oversight and fairness within these agencies is essential in upholding civil liberties and promoting equitable treatment for all individuals. Therefore, CMPAC maintains that additional measures to enhance government accountability and transparency in security measures are necessary to address the concerns outlined in its original submission.

5. Expansion of the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia:

In its original submission, CMPAC advocated for increased funding and personnel for the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia (OSRCI). The aim was to strengthen the office's capacity to develop and implement comprehensive programs aimed at addressing the significant challenge of Islamophobia in Canada. CMPAC's recommendation for the expansion of the OSRCI stemmed from the recognition of the urgent need to combat Islamophobia and protect Muslim communities in Canada. By advocating for increased funding and personnel, CMPAC aimed to enhance the office's ability to provide guidance to the government, inform policy development, identify inherent systemic Islamophobia, track incidents of anti-Muslim hatred, promote public education, and engage with diverse stakeholders effectively.

CMPAC acknowledges the inclusion of funding to support the OSRCI as a positive step towards enabling OSRCI to fulfill its mandate. CMPAC will continue to advocate to expand the impact of the OSRCI beyond a consultative advisory mandate. The office should be given broader authority to implement programs to address structural Islamophobia in the government and raise public awareness to eradicate Islamophobia.

6. Providing Comprehensive Support for Palestinians:

In its original submission, CMPAC emphasized the need for comprehensive support for Palestinians, outlining specific areas of focus including relief for Palestinian families immigrating to Canada, sustained support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and substantial contributions toward the rebuilding of Gaza. These recommendations were driven by the recognition of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, and the need for Canada to play a proactive role in providing assistance to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian communities.

While the budget may include allocations for humanitarian aid, there is a notable absence of targeted measures addressing the specific needs of Palestinian communities. This includes initiatives like relief for Palestinian families immigrating to Canada, involving financial assistance, housing support, and specialized community programs essential for their successful relocation and integration into Canadian society. Additionally, sustained support for UNRWA, encompassing funding for education, healthcare, and humanitarian aid, is crucial for addressing the acute needs of displaced Palestinian in Gaza. Moreover, substantial contributions toward the rebuilding of Gaza, focusing on essential infrastructure, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions, are vital for uplifting living conditions and fostering resilience in conflict-affected areas. The absence of these targeted measures represents a significant gap in addressing CMPAC's proposal for comprehensive support for Palestinians.

CMPAC believes that Canada has an obligation to provide comprehensive support to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian communities, as outlined in its original submission. Therefore, CMPAC maintains that additional measures are necessary to ensure that the budget adequately addresses the recommendations put forth for supporting Palestinians.

7. Additional Initiatives in the Budget

The expansion of access to alternative financial products and the initiative to eradicate forced labour demonstrate a recognition of important concerns within the Muslim community. However, the effectiveness and meaningfulness of these initiatives will depend on their implementation and enforcement. Therefore, it is essential for the government to ensure transparency, accountability, and community engagement throughout the process to address the needs and concerns of the Muslim community effectively.

(a) Expansion of Access to Alternative Financial Products

The expansion of access to alternative financial products, particularly those adhering to Islamic principles such as halal financing, represents a positive acknowledgment of the diverse needs within the Muslim community. This initiative has the potential to positively impact economic participation among Muslims who adhere strictly to Islamic finance principles, which prohibit interest.

However, the true effectiveness and meaningfulness of this initiative will depend on the extent of its implementation and the accessibility of these alternative financial products to the broader Muslim population. To be a meaningful initiative, this proposal requires grounded research and genuine engagement of qualified Islamic finance scholars who can provide real Halal options for Muslims. Overall, while this initiative might be a step in the right direction, its impact should be closely monitored to ensure it effectively addresses the financial needs of the Muslim community.

(b) Eradicating Forced Labour

Eradicating forced labour from Canadian supply chains and reinforcing the ban on goods produced with forced labour is a crucial initiative that resonates deeply within the Muslim community, particularly in light of ongoing human rights violations against Muslim minorities like the Uyghurs. This commitment to addressing international human rights abuses reflects a commendable stance by the government, aligning with broader values of combatting discrimination and supporting vulnerable communities worldwide.

Although CMPAC did not explicitly include measures addressing such international human rights abuses in its original submission, the inclusion of this initiative in the budget is a welcome development. However, the effectiveness of this initiative will depend on robust enforcement mechanisms and collaboration with international partners to ensure that Canadian supply chains remain free from products tainted by forced labor. Overall, while this initiative is a positive step

towards addressing a critical global issue, continued vigilance and concerted efforts are necessary to ensure its meaningful impact in combating forced labor and supporting affected communities.

Conclusion

CMPAC is committed to advocating for substantive measures that comprehensively address the concerns of the Muslim community, emphasizing the importance of targeted actions to combat racism, systemic Islamophobia, and human rights violations.

In assessing Canada's Budget 2024 against CMPAC's comprehensive proposals, it becomes evident that while some strides have been made towards addressing the needs and concerns of the Muslim community, there remains substantial gaps. The budget reflects a partial alignment with CMPAC's recommendations, showcasing progress in areas such as increased funding for the Office of the Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia (OSRCI). However, critical aspects outlined by CMPAC, such as combating discrimination and Islamophobia across government, and providing comprehensive support for Palestinians, are notably absent or insufficiently addressed. While the inclusion of additional proposals highlights the government's recognition of certain community needs, their effectiveness hinges on genuine engagement of community experts and robust implementation.