



*The Anti-Racism Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARC-NL) is a grass-roots, non-profit coalition of community members whose main objective is to promote and support a culture of anti-racism within the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Visit our Facebook page @arcofnl and join our group of almost 3K more information on addressing all forms of racism.*

## **Anti-Racism Coalition NL Submission to the Ministerial Committee on Anti-Racism**

February 28, 2022

The **Anti-Racism Coalition Newfoundland and Labrador** (ARC-NL) calls on the **Ministerial Committee on Anti-Racism** (MCAR), acting on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (GNL), to address systemic racism and exclusionary practices present throughout government and across the Province.

The formation of the MCAR and the inclusion of four key ministers is an early and hopeful indication that the GNL wishes to begin its work to counter all forms of racism. However, we are concerned that it is heavy on the performance side and light on responsiveness and accountability to affected communities. We are particularly concerned that there is no committed funding allocated to anti-racism: this concern is exacerbated given the 2021 Premier's Economic Recovery Report where cuts to crucial social, health and economic services are expected. Anti-racism work without any commitments to funding is only window-dressing. We are also skeptical about the calls for stories made by members of the MCAR, rather than concrete policy solutions. Anti-racism must be a thoughtful and intentional project, with funds allocated and specific commitments, goals and accountability.

There are significant differences between anti-racism and multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion work. Anti-racist work cannot be done without a significant shift in perspective. So far, the GNL has demonstrated that it is not committed to anti-racism beyond its historical emphasis on intercultural communication, performative multiculturalism and narrowly defined economic-driven immigration and multicultural policy. This focus must shift to racial equity, racial justice, and responsive and community-engaged anti-racist policy change.

To do so, ARC-NL asks that the Ministerial Committee:

1. Allocate adequate funding to do this anti-racist work;
2. Make concrete commitments, goals and evaluation of your efforts;
3. Develop a paid community steering committee of members from racialized and Indigenous communities with expertise in anti-racism to guide the anti-racist work of the GNL;
4. Establish the use of an anti-racist lens to guide all development and review of policies and practices of the GNL;

5. Undertake a thorough review of all government legislation, departments, programs, staffing and decision-making; and,
6. Recommend that provisions be made for a longer-term Provincial Anti-Racism Plan and implementation (see Appendix B outlines a way forward).

This is difficult work, but also imperative work that will significantly strengthen our province: NL needs anti-racism now ([Giwa, 2018](#)). Anti-racism is an all-encompassing lens, because like other forms of injustice and inequity, racism shows up everywhere. As such, if the GNL is serious about tackling racism—that is, anti-racism—it must engage community groups like ARC-NL and its allies who have been engaging in this work in this province, and across Canada.

ARC-NL's volunteer members and partner organizations have made calls to the government to engage in conversation about racism and to address racism, assembled reports, recommendations and detailed submissions over the last five years that address the themes the MCAR has sought input on. In recent months, we have also prepared presentations and/or submissions respecting the NL Health Accord; the *Healthcare for All* call; the *Elections Act* review; anti-racist education (responding to the racist K-12 social studies curriculum), and are currently preparing a submission for the Minimum Wage Review Committee.

In lieu of a new essay recapitulating this large body of unpaid anti-racist work, the Coalition's written submission consists of this synopsis and a selection of appendices, as follows:

- Appendix A: Speaking notes from our 31 January 2022 presentation to the Ministerial Committee
- Appendix B: *Addressing Islamophobia* Provincial Recommendations (September 2019)
- Appendix C: ARC-NL 2021 Provincial Election Statement and Questions to Candidates/Parties (January 2021)
- Appendix D: Summary of Healthcare for All submission to NL Health Accord (October 2021)
- Appendix E: Educational Reform submission (letter to Minister) (January 2022)
- Appendix F: Recent submission to the Elections Act Review Committee (February 2022)

The appendices we provide are a selection of ARC-NL's work to date that are reflective of our core recommendations on provincial anti-racism process and policy, and, as well, demonstrate how we might drill down to specific anti-racist actions in various departmental domains and categories of community needs.

You can reach us at [antiracismcoalitionnl@gmail.com](mailto:antiracismcoalitionnl@gmail.com) if you have any questions about any part of our submission.

### **Appendix A: Speaking notes to Ministerial Committee on Anti-Racism, January 31, 2022**

Our presentation to the MCAR underscores the need for a concrete future-forward strategy and plan for addressing systemic racism across the province and within government decision-making, programs, and services. We enumerated the work that ARC-NL and its allies have been doing over the years to get past and current governments to take the issue of systemic racism and discrimination seriously, and to act swiftly based on community-driven interventions, which highlight the collective impacts of racism and discrimination on racialized members of our communities. Until now, the general lack of action has been accompanied by an unwillingness

to name racism and to couch this conversation under the umbrella of multiculturalism, an ideology and perspective antithetical to the critical approaches advanced by an anti-racist lens. The MCAR represents a sharp turn from our previous engagement with the NL Government from February 2017-December 2021 where any conversations we attempted to start about racism (including Islamophobia) were re-directed towards “welcoming” initiatives, “diversity calendars.” It is not enough to be sad, or shocked, or stand in solidarity after more ‘evidence’ mounts that racism exist in our province and others: we need concrete anti-racist commitments and action.

While the speaking notes offer a number of critiques of the process-to-date, they also suggest several areas of concern which must be addressed as the GNL continues its anti-racist work. Here are just a few ideas from our speaking notes that the MCAR and GNL can use to guide their anti-racist work moving forward:

- Acknowledge, and take actions to redress, historical and current forms of racism and colonialism in the province;
- Consult and meaningfully engage with groups and individuals who have been leaders of early anti-racist work in the province;
- Attend to, and develop strategies to counter, growing white supremacist organizing in the province;
- Develop policies and practices to address racist discrimination exhibited by politicians;
- Provide funding for concrete anti-racism capacity building;
- Undertake anti-racist educational reform in the K-12 and post-secondary institutions;
- Move away from economic-driven multicultural and immigration policy to ones of justice and equity; and,
- Continue the work to enact the calls from the TRC, MMIWG2S+, UNDRIP reports.

## **Appendix B: Addressing Islamophobia in NL Recommendations, September 2019**

We have attached a copy of the recommendations presented to the GNL in September 2019 from the [Addressing Islamophobia in NL Community Report](#) (Shaikh & Selby, 2019). ARC-NL was the main external partner of this community-university engagement project, along with most of our community partners. The three main recommendations to the provincial government were that the GNL: (1) develop an anti-racism/anti-Islamophobia action plan; (2) fund the Human Rights Commission of NL and the Anti-Racism Coalition of NL to monitor and report on the prevalence and effects of incidents of racist, Islamophobic and other forms of cultural and religious discrimination; and (3) promote anti-racism and anti-Islamophobia in all sectors through public education, collaborative community discussions, and government policy, in all sectors that the provincial government have jurisdiction. This community report lays out a very clearly defined map of a process which includes concrete commitments, action and accountability, developed through a two-year community-engaged process. However, the MCAR, has chosen to ignore these recommendations, and instead opted for a public-facing and shallow community consultation and engagement process.

We ask that the MCAR and GNL review these recommendations, and to discuss how these recommendations can better respond to calls for anti-racism that have emerged since 2019. Members of the Addressing Islamophobia in NL and ARC-NL would be open to discussions about how these recommendations can be actualized in the coming months.

## **Appendix C: ARC-NL Provincial Election Statement and Questions to Candidates/Parties, January 2021**

ARC-NL framed another clear call to action a year ago by asking parties and candidates in the Provincial Election to respond to eleven racism-related questions, which we titled “The Anti-Racism Commitments We Need”. These questions were organized in four themes: A) On hate speech, racism, xenophobia and white nationalism in NL; B) On supporting ‘newcomers’ to NL; C) On addressing racism in the political process; D) On Indigenous sovereignty and reconciliation; and, E) On provincial funding and resources for anti-racism action. We ask that the MCAR develop specific commitments and actions in these areas as it continues its work.

While we understand that the responses during an election are not necessarily the priorities of the government, the inadequacy of the responses by the Liberal Party signal a lack of understanding of anti-racism. As we indicated in our presentation at the MCAR on January 31, 2022, the Liberal Party provided a lopsided reply, addressing just six of the topics. The glaring gaps apparent at the time included the lack of positions related to hate speech or the improving the engagement and participation of Indigenous, Black, migrant and other racialized communities in political processes – including in Liberal party ranks and among elected members; no provisions for migrant workers and student health and welfare measures at that time in 2021; and, nothing on the resourcing of essential anti-racism and equity-building work by NGOs here. Surprisingly – given the economic preoccupations of the government’s standing *Way Forward* immigration action plans, there wasn’t even a reply on encouragements for newcomer entrepreneurship.

The Liberal response did reference commitments on some Indigenous rights issues, however, even those actions were preliminary in nature. That Liberal policy was making some progress on Indigenous matters without similarly addressing non-Indigenous anti-racism themes suggested even then that a clear understanding of the complex, intersectional dimensions of racism has been lacking.

## **Appendix D: Summary of *Healthcare for All* Submission to NL Health Accord, October 2021**

The main thrust of the ARC-NL *Healthcare for All Campaign’s* organizing and advocacy efforts have been directed towards removing “citizenship status” and work/study status as a requirement for healthcare, including vaccines, vaccine passes and MCP. Members of the *Healthcare for All Campaign* made a joint submission/presentation with *Addressing Islamophobia in NL* to the NL Health Accord. Our presentation elaborated on extensive lived experience, research and analysis of the precarity that migrants face because of the lack of healthcare. We asked the NL Health Accord to: 1) take an anti-racist lens to their work; 2) address racist bias and exclusion in healthcare policy making, particularly in relation to migrant health; 3) meaningfully address racist and Islamophobic discrimination in healthcare delivery; and, most importantly, 4) to extend healthcare through an expansion of MCP coverage to all residents of the province, regardless of their citizenship and work/study status.

During a meeting with members of the Addressing Islamophobia in NL Project, Minister Byrne referenced a policy change to extend the MCP coverage for international students from an additional 90 days after their studies (although this has not yet been reflected on the website). We were glad to see that there is less precarity for a few more people who fall into this category,

for a few more days. Thank you to the GNL and those who advocated for, and will actualize, this change. We were disheartened that a mere 90-days was touted as “the best across the country,” as if it truly rectified systemic racism in access to healthcare for those with precarious citizenship status. Had ARC-NL and/or Addressing Islamophobia in NL been asked, we would have told the Minister of Health that this was insufficient, inefficient, and divisive because it does not address the precarity and systemic racism faced by many racialized and migrant individuals and families. There is an easy solution to the problem of systemic racism in access to healthcare: ensure that MCP coverage is guaranteed for all who call NL home and is not connected to employment, school or citizenship status.

#### **Appendix E: Letter to Minister Osborne re Anti-Racist Educational Reform, January 2022**

Please see the letter we sent to Minister Osborne in which we ask that the Department of Education undertake anti-racist educational reform. Some examples of such a reform process notably include: engaging a paid committee of racialized consultants from migrant, Indigenous and racialized communities with anti-racist expertise to undertake ongoing curriculum review; developing an anti-racist curriculum framework; providing funding for antiracist training; and, actively recruiting and retaining K-12 teachers and curriculum writers from Indigenous, migrant and racialized communities.

After our meeting with the Minister and members of the Department, we were better able to understand that there is tremendous need for anti-racist literacy and training for all members of the Department. We intend to follow up with the Minister and members of the Department.

#### **Appendix F: ARC-NL Submission to the Elections Act Review Committee, February 2022**

In our submission to the Elections Act Review Committee, we wrote that the GNL and Elections NL must reconsider its engagement of Indigenous, migrant and/or racialized communities, and attend to language and cultural barriers in political processes, including within the electoral system. Language barriers are significant deterrents to democratic participation and the principles of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in NL. For this reason, we asked that the Committee address the significant language barriers that exist for many in the province. In addition, we asked that the GNL enhance its public education about the electoral system and voting practices, particularly in relation to Indigenous, racialized and migrant communities.

The 2021 provincial election exposed barriers specific to Indigenous, rural and remote, migrant and/or racialized communities. ARC-NL submitted ten (10) imperative recommendations for change in the *Elections Act, 1991*. We advocated for an equitable electoral system and variety of ways to remediate structural racism, bias and exclusion in future provincial elections.

Finally, in respect of the remaining deliberations of the Ministerial Committee, we offer the following suggestions:

**1. Be explicit and intentional about your commitments to anti-racism.**

Use critical terms like “racism”, “anti-racist”, “colonial”, “white” and others that refer to facets of the systemic problem acknowledged to exist. Oblique or so-called polite government policy language (i.e. “intercultural competency training” or using the words “racial curriculum” instead of the words “racist curriculum”) has signaled that you are not prepared to engage in or model necessarily uncomfortable discussions and break with the *status quo*. Diversity, multicultural, welcoming, and inclusion efforts are ineffective in working against racism in the absence of justice and equity.

Further, your approach to making anti-racist change in an *ad hoc* and unintentional way (no report, no recommendations) is concerning. This is another signal that the Ministerial Committee, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is unprepared to commit to any real plan, and to be accountable to anti-racist change. Further, it echoes outdated eras of paternalistic and colonial relationships between government and diverse peoples.

**2. Model better practices.**

As the *Addressing Islamophobia in NL Community Report* (Shaikh & Selby, 2019) states, the GNL is uniquely positioned to provide leadership, support and accountability for anti-racism in the province. The GNL must model better practices in this work. Extending the consultation period was a good call. There remain significant concerns, however, for an anti-racism discovery process that privileges Ministerial discretion, with no accountability measures. Clearly declaring the MCAR’s own guiding anti-racist principles; researching and sharing evidence-based inputs from other jurisdictions to better frame consultations; and fostering true dialogue on priorities and desired outcomes (as opposed to soliciting “stories”) would inspire greater confidence on the part of Indigenous, racialized and migrant voices most affected by existing barriers and discrimination. Our specific suggestions for a way forward to addressing GNL are outlined in the *Addressing Islamophobia in NL Community Report* of September 2019, particularly in Recommendation #1. As well, we ask that you take seriously the “whole-of-government” approach that we advocated for in our work with the *Addressing Islamophobia in NL Project* (see Recommendation #3, which outlines a number of areas where there was significant conversation during our community engagement process). The inclusion of four Ministers is certainly a good start, but there were notable Departments absent, for example, Health and Community Services, and Children, Seniors and Social Development.

**3. Commit to the long view.**

This is not just about ‘*what government does*’. Early and ongoing work to eradicate racism in NL has been driven by individuals, racialized-Black-Indigenous community alliances and advocacy groups. We distinguish between these efforts and other organizations and interests that have existed through prior iterations of multicultural policy and funding: there is a difference between anti-racist work and diversity/inclusion/welcoming/multicultural efforts. Addressing racism means creating a new, safe space here, removed from older politics, where unfamiliar actors – including all the ones who aren’t here yet - can be reconciled with established organizations, service providers and previously funded partners. It will take time and plenty of discomfort to build different kinds of relationships and eliminate racism in Newfoundland and Labrador. Plan for it.