

**SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S PRE-BUDGET  
CONSULTATIONS**

**RECONSTRUCTION AND RESET - A PLAN FOR CANADA  
February 2021**

COVID-19 has exposed and significantly increased pre-existing racial inequities in Canada. The policy responses by different orders of government have failed to redress structural and systemic disadvantages along racial lines.

The pandemic has amplified major racial inequalities in employment, healthcare, access to senior care, housing, access to justice and education. Anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism continue unabated. The rise of anti-Asian hate has been ignored. COVID-19 has also made visible Canada's hypocrisy towards migrant workers – their work is deemed essential, yet the workers themselves are treated as disposable.

According to a Statistics Canada [Labour Force Survey](#) released in August, 2020, there have been unprecedented increases in unemployment due to the COVID-19 economic shutdown, and the impact falls most harshly on racialized communities. While the national unemployment rate for those aged 15 to 69 was 11.3% in July 2020, several racialized communities had rates of joblessness significantly above this average including South Asian (17.8%), Arab (17.3%), and Black (16.8%). The Report also found that South Asian (+9.1 percentage points) and Chinese (+8.4 percentage points) Canadians experienced a much higher increase in unemployment from July 2019 to July 2020, compared to other groups.

In a more recent [Labour Force Survey](#) released on January 20, 2021, Statistics Canada reported the unemployment rate among Southeast Asian Canadians aged 15 to 69 increased by 7.6 percentage points to 20.1% in January (not seasonally adjusted). The unemployment rate also increased notably among Black Canadians (+5.5 percentage points to 16.4%) and Latin American Canadians (+4.5 percentage points to 16.6%) in January (not seasonally adjusted). The number of unemployed Black Canadians increased by 42,000, with more than three-quarters of the increase occurring in Quebec and Ontario.

While the Canadian government is working on a recovery plan from the pandemic, we need to reimagine what a society founded on justice, equity and dignity would truly look like. To that end, the Colour of Poverty Colour of Change (COP-COC) is proposing a **Reconstruction and Reset Plan** for Canada, one that will not only address racial inequality, but lay the foundation for a more prosperous and fair society for all.

We envision a future of an egalitarian Canada where the rights of all people are respected, and where Indigenous Peoples' demand for justice, sovereignty and full

nation-to-nation relationships with Canada are acknowledged and supported. As such, we call on Canada to begin by negotiating directly with appropriate Indigenous Peoples leadership on a distinctions based recovery and reset plan.

Further the COP-COC's Reconstruction and Reset Plan is set out as follows:

### **Anti-Racism**

- Create a National Action Plan Against Racism to accompany and provide the necessary details for the national Anti-Racism Strategy, containing concrete strategies with actionable goals, measurable targets, and timetables, and the necessary resource allocations to accompany each strategy and action to address all relevant forms of racism and faithism - including anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism and Islamophobia.
- Adopt a federal Anti-Racism Act to build a legislative framework and foundation for the Anti-Racism Secretariat - with dedicated and sustainable funding support. The Anti-Racism Act must name and address all relevant racism and faithism, including anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, and Islamophobia.

### **Data Collection**

- Mandate the collection of data disaggregated by race and other sociodemographic identities to better measure and understand the racial and equitable impacts of government policies, budget allocations, programs, and practices in the labour market, economic inequality, and poverty; in policing, the criminal justice system and access to justice; in child welfare; environment; health and mental health; housing; social and cultural benefits; education; refugee protection, interdiction, immigration and citizenship; and media, social media, and mass communication.
- Develop regular and transparent reporting mechanisms and an accountability framework for the ownership and responsible use of data to improve life outcomes and wellbeing of racialized communities.

### **Employment Equity**

Strengthen the federal Employment Equity Act to ensure racialized and other equity seeking groups and historically disadvantaged communities have equitable access to all labour market opportunities across Canada. More fully we need strong Employment Equity legislation - federally, provincially, territorially, municipally - frameworks that are –

- restored;
- comprehensive;
- expanded - Indigenous Peoples, peoples of colour, women, persons with (dis)abilities AND 2SLGBTQ+ individuals;
- appropriately and consistently disaggregated in their implementation and application;
- resourced;
- monitored; AND
- enforced.

As we "build back better" we can realise this critical policy objective through

- adding "employment equity" consistent obligations and conditionality to all economic recovery, social and physical infrastructure investments and financial transfers;
- using federal government good offices to encourage the development of parallel sister legislated employment equity regimes – provincially, territorially, municipally;
- requiring impact and community benefit agreements (CBA's) to be attached to all investments - which include employment equity obligations and requirements; AND
- ensuring fair and equitable public procurement contractor provisions.

As further background see - [Employment Equity](#) – and - [Équité En Matière D'emploi](#)

### **Equitable Access to Federal Benefits**

- Repeal s.122.6(5) of the Income Tax Act which defines eligibility to Canada Child Benefits based on the parents' immigration status.
- Removal immigration status as an eligibility requirement for all federal benefits including all emergency relief benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Gender Equality**

- Create a national Affordable Child Care strategy based on and delivered through a gender and racial equity lens
- Provide targeted funding for racialized communities to address gender-based violence.

### **Health Equity**

- Develop a comprehensive and intersectional National Health Equity Strategy including a strategy for Senior Care to address racial inequities in access and in health outcomes.

### **Immigration**

- Implement a fair and equitable regularization program to provide a pathway to permanent residence status for all people with precarious immigration status, including all migrant workers.
- Develop national regulatory standards for the protection and safety of precarious workers and migrant workers.
- Rebalance the overall immigration program by increasing family reunification and relaxing criteria to be more fair and inclusive, and by extending the economic immigration program to applicants in all occupations and skill levels (including all occupations deemed essential work during the pandemic).
- End all immigration detention, and pursue alternatives in situations where detention is judged to be necessary, consistent with respect for dignity and human rights.
- Open up settlement and integration services for all regardless of status.

- Establish a fully resourced independent oversight body for the Canada Border Services Agency.
- Repeal criminal inadmissibility in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)* to remove double punishment and end double jeopardy.
- Repeal the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement.
- Eliminate citizenship fees.

### **Justice**

- Provide sustainable and adequate funding for legal aid.
- Systematically coordinate the documentation and tracking of racist hate crimes across all provinces and territories.
- Work toward the elimination of disproportionately high rates of incarceration of Indigenous people and people of African descent, as well as other racialized people over-represented in correctional facilities.
- Mandate the RCMP to collect and report out on race based data and work with other orders of government to eliminate systemic racism in policing across the country.

### **Poverty Reduction and Housing**

- Update both the federal Poverty Reduction Strategy and the National Housing Strategy to include targeted actions and objectives to alleviate disproportionate levels of poverty and address core housing needs across racialized communities.

**Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change** is the racial justice education and advocacy network in Ontario. We work for racial equity, human dignity and social justice by helping to build community based capacity to address systemic racism, the growing racialization of poverty and the resulting increased levels of social exclusion and marginalization of racialized communities – both First Peoples and peoples of colour – in Ontario.

### **COP-COC Steering Committee members –**

Access Alliance Multicultural Health & Community Services  
 Black Legal Action Centre  
 Canadian Arab Federation  
 Chinese and South East Asian Legal Clinic  
 Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter  
 Council of Agencies Serving South Asians  
 Hispanic Development Council  
 Karuna Community Services  
 La Passerelle – I.D.E.  
 Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto  
 Midaynta Community Services  
 OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants  
 Punjabi Community Health Services

South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario  
The Neighbourhood Organization  
Urban Alliance on Race Relations  
Academic Partner: Professor Grace Edward Galabuzi