

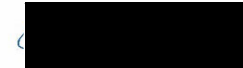


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Item No. 13.1.1
Executive Standing Committee
March 25, 2024

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY:



Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 21, 2024

SUBJECT: **Combatting Islamophobia and Improving the Safety of Muslim Women and Girls**

ORIGIN

December 13, 2021, Executive Standing Committee motion (item 2.2.2 Reviewing and Learning from the Steps Taken to Protect Muslim Canadians by Other Canadian Municipalities and Levels of Governments)

The following was before Executive Standing Committee:

A recommendation report from Women's Advisory Committee dated December 2, 2021

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Lovelace, seconded by Councillor Russell

THAT the Executive Standing Committee direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare a staff report that investigates other municipalities' work around anti-Muslim hate and racism and makes recommendations on potential actions to combat anti-Muslim hate and racism, particularly with respect to women, in Halifax Regional Municipality.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to:

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

Administrative Order Number 2020-002- GOV, the Social Policy

4. Council hereby endorses the following Social Policy Vision: “HRM is a safe, healthy, and welcoming community where everyone is able to participate fully in their community.”
5. Council hereby endorses the following Social Policy Goals:
 - (a) Strengthen community health and wellbeing;
 - (i) HRM citizens and visitors are safe where they live, learn, work, and play;
 - (iii) HRM shall be an active partner in supporting community wellbeing programs
 - (b) Enhance equity and inclusion;
 - (i) HRM is a leader in building an accessible community where everyone can participate fully in life;
 - (iii) HRM is a diverse and inclusive community that supports everybody;
 - (c) Build on social assets and community capacity;
 - (ii) HRM communities, families, youth and seniors have access to social infrastructure that enables them to participate fully in their community;

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to:

1. Strike a working group of municipal staff to create an action plan to combat Islamophobia and improve the safety of Muslim women and girls, incorporating findings from this report.
2. Direct staff to explore potential sources of funding from provincial and federal government to support this work.
3. Direct staff to return to Regional Council to provide a supplementary report on progress made and resources required for implementation.

BACKGROUND

Please note this report includes discussion of Islamophobia, hate and gender-based violence. Please take care when reading. If you need support, the following resource may be helpful: Riverdale Immigrant Women’s Centre’s [Islamophobia Support Line](#).

In August 2021, Haneen Al-Noman of the Women’s Advisory Committee of Halifax (WACH) made a presentation to the Executive Standing Committee (ESC) about Muslim women and girls’ experiences of discrimination and sexism in Halifax.

The presentation by WACH, and the ESC motion that arose from it, called for the municipality to investigate other municipalities’ work around anti-Muslim hate and racism and make recommendations on potential actions to combat anti-Muslim hate and racism in HRM, particularly with respect to women.

DISCUSSION

Islamophobia in Canada

Islamophobia is defined as “stereotypes, bias or acts of hostility towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general”.¹ It manifests as individual acts of intolerance, racial profiling and hate and institutional, systemic, and societal systems, practices and narratives that perpetuate harmful and discriminatory ideas of Muslim people.

The gravity of the issue is evident in the statistics: between 2016 and 2021, more Muslim people were killed in targeted hate attacks in Canada than any other G7 country.² Figures released in March 2023 indicate that police-reported hate crimes targeting Muslims increased by 71 per cent from 2020 to 2021.³

In June 2021, four members of the Afzaal family were murdered in London, Ontario—a lethal crime driven by Islamophobia and hate, the impacts of which were felt across the country. The Superior Court ruling on February 22, 2024, concluded that the targeted killing of members of the Afzaal family constituted an act of terrorism, and notably, “marks the first time in Canadian history that a case involving white nationalism has met the threshold of terrorism”.⁴

Further, the Quebec City Mosque attack, the killing of Mohamed-Aslim Zafis at a mosque in Toronto, violent attacks on racialized women wearing hijabs, hateful rallies in front of mosques, anti-Muslim rhetoric espoused by governments and daily instances of hate have had devastating impacts on countless individuals, families, and communities in Halifax and across Canada.⁵

In July 2021, communities and organizations across the country declared that “political leaders at every level of government...need to urgently change policy to prevent another attack targeting Canadian Muslims.”⁶

The federal government responded by convening the [Emergency National Action Summit on Islamophobia](#). At this summit, Muslim individuals, coalitions, and organizations, including representatives from Halifax, presented several key actions that municipalities can take to combat Islamophobia.⁷ These actions range from public education, training and funding for community-based anti-hate initiatives. A summary of the actions is included in the summary of findings presented in Attachment 3.

Following the summit, the federal government appointed Amira Elghawaby, Canada’s first [Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia](#) and continues to work to develop a new federal Anti-Racism Strategy and Canada’s first ever Action Plan on Combatting Hate.

Intersectionality, Gender and Islamophobia

While Muslim people share the same Islamic faith, they are diverse in their backgrounds, cultures, and other elements of identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, language, abilities, and citizenship status.⁸ For Muslim people who hold several of these identities, experiences of Islamophobia can be compounded and intensified by other forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, ableism, and xenophobia.

Muslim women and girls who wear visible indicators of their faith—such as the hijab or niqab—are more vulnerable to acts of Islamophobia. A [2023 report](#) from the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights states that gendered Islamophobia is one of the most common forms of Islamophobia in Canada.⁹

¹ Source: [“In Their Words: Untold Stories of Islamophobia in Canada”](#), Islamic Relief Canada, 2022.

² Source: “National Council of Canadian Muslims ([NCCM Recommendations National Summit on Islamophobia](#)”, NCCM, 2021.

³ Source: [“Police-reported hate crime, 2021”](#), Statistics Canada, March 2023.

⁴ Source: [“Statement on the Finding of Terrorism in the Sentencing of the Perpetrator in the London Family Attack” Canada](#) Government of Canada, February 22, 2014.

⁵ Source: [“NCCM Recommendations National Summit on Islamophobia”](#), NCCM, 2021.

⁶ Source: Parliament of Canada, 43rd Parliament Second Session, [Hansard-116](#), June 11, 2021.

⁷ Source: [“NCCM Recommendations National Summit on Islamophobia”](#), NCCM, 2021.

⁸ Source: [“Combating Hate: Islamophobia and its Impact on Muslims in Canada”](#), Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2023.

⁹ Source: [“Combating Hate: Islamophobia and its Impact on Muslims in Canada”](#), Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2023.

Combatting Islamophobia and Making Public Spaces Safer for Muslim Women and Girls in HRM

As noted above, Islamophobia is a national issue. It is deeply embedded in the country's history, and perpetuated through contemporary legislation, policies, discourses, and practices occurring at multiple scales and jurisdictions.¹⁰ At the same time, the experience of Islamophobia and other intersecting forms of discrimination is very much a local phenomenon—experienced by Muslim individuals and communities in parks, streets, playgrounds, buses, and workplaces. Municipalities, including HRM, thus have an important role in addressing it. In taking actions to make places safer and more inclusive to those most impacted by violence, the municipality can, in turn, be made safer for everyone.¹¹

To this end, in developing recommendations to the Executive Standing Committee, staff conducted a jurisdictional scan of actions to address Islamophobia, specifically those that align with municipal actions identified in the 2021 Emergency National Summit on Islamophobia.

Given the distinct ways in which religion and gender intersect with experiences of Islamophobia, and as reflected in Haneen Al-Noman's original motion, staff also conducted community engagement with nearly 100 diverse Muslim women and girls across the municipality.

Synthesizing best practices from the National Summit with other municipalities' actions and incorporating local insights from Muslim women and girls in HRM, staff then identified municipal efforts already underway in HRM that align with these findings. This analysis, presented in Attachment 3, was then used to develop recommended actions.

Jurisdictional Scan: Canadian Municipalities' Responses to Combat Islamophobia

In the jurisdictional scan of municipal actions to address Islamophobia, staff focused on capital cities and cities of comparable size to HRM in each province. Cities that were found to have taken action to address Islamophobia are included in the full scan found in Attachment 1.

Actions taken by other municipalities fall within these key themes:

- collaborative public education campaigns
- support (in terms of grants and other funding) for community-led initiatives focused on anti-racism, safety, equity, inclusion and building connections across communities
- accessible and culturally responsive reporting options for hate incidents and crimes
- consistent public condemnation of Islamophobia by elected officials and senior leadership
- forums (such as mayoral advisories, roundtables or working groups) to identify issues of Islamophobia and co-create action plans with impacted communities
- strategic plans that expressly address Islamophobia, or that broadly address racism and discrimination, inclusive of Islamophobia
- initiatives that address the intersection of gender-based discrimination and Islamophobia

Community Engagement: Guidance and Perspective from Muslim Women and Girls in Halifax

Nearly 100 Muslim women and girls across the municipality participated in community engagement for this report. The engagements were co-designed with consultant Rana Zaman, who led efforts to ensure the sessions were safe, inclusive, and accessible to diverse Muslim women and girls.

¹⁰ Source: "[Combatting Hate: Islamophobia and its Impact on Muslims in Canada](#)", Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, 2023.

¹¹ Sources: Jane Jacobs (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Random House: New York.; Leslie Kern (2019) *The Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World*. Verso Books: New York.

Across the engagements, participants shared experiences of witnessing or being targeted by Islamophobic acts, and generated ideas for action—such as training and public education efforts—that support findings from the jurisdictional scan, while also centering the voices and experiences of Muslim women and girls. When asked what safety would feel like to them, major themes included being represented in municipal services, spaces, and programs. Another was safety and trust, noting that “not [having] to feel alert all the time and always looking back” would greatly alleviate the insecurity they feel in many municipal spaces such as on transit and in parks. Participants also underscored the importance of knowing that when they share stories of their experiences of Islamophobia, they will be believed and supported.

A full summary of findings from the community engagements can be found in the “What We Heard” Report (Attachment 2) prepared by the consultant.

Existing HRM Activities Addressing Islamophobia and Recommended Next Steps

As illustrated in Attachment 3, several municipal efforts are underway that align with actions identified in the Emergency National Action Summit on Islamophobia, jurisdictional scan, and community engagements.

These efforts include public condemnation of Islamophobia by Regional Council; the creation of advisory boards inclusive of Muslim women; The Diversity and Inclusion Champions Table; the implementation of the Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Program; the Public Safety Strategy; the Anti-Black Racism Framework; intercultural competency training and business unit specific actions to make workplaces more welcoming to Muslim employees.¹²

Taken together, these efforts can be viewed as progress toward directly or indirectly addressing Islamophobia and the safety of Muslim women and girls. However, comparing the municipality’s current efforts to best practices from other jurisdictions and learnings from the community engagements, it is evident that the municipality lacks a coherent approach toward combating Islamophobia and the disproportionate impact it has on Muslim women and girls.

Accordingly, staff recommend the creation of a staff working group, with membership inclusive of Muslim women, to develop a more intentional, strategic, and collaborative approach to addressing Islamophobia. While priorities should be determined by the working group, at a minimum it should be tasked with:

- establishing an action plan that ties together currently unconnected initiatives and provides a guiding framework for improved efforts to support the safety of Muslim communities in HRM
- further integrating Islamophobia into existing municipal frameworks and strategies focused on diversity, inclusion, equity and safety, ensuring that Islamophobia is considered a distinct experience that intersects with other forms of discrimination and violence
- continuing to nurture avenues for stronger relationships between the municipality and diverse Muslim communities in HRM, including with Muslim women and youth

Currently, no dedicated municipal staff or resources have been identified to lead a strategic and coordinated approach to this work. However, this report demonstrates that there are staff across the organization committed to championing and supporting these efforts.

Should the Executive Standing Committee approve the recommendations, the working group should return to Council to report on progress in relation to the tasks above and identify any additional resources necessary to further advance and sustain this work.

¹² While staff endeavored to conduct a thorough scan, the findings may not be representative of all efforts that indirectly address Islamophobia. As noted in the recommendation section above, and based on the research conducted for this report, staff advise that further efforts toward these ends be undertaken.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report. Should the recommendations be approved, staff will return with a supplementary report identifying additional resources that may be required.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Risks of not proceeding with the recommendations:

Islamophobia poses serious risks to the health, well-being, connectedness and safety of Muslim residents and communities within HRM and, by extension, all communities in the municipality.

The recommendations outlined in this report offer important avenues to making communities safer and more inclusive for Muslim women and girls. While these recommendations will not solve issues of Islamophobia and hate, they aim to make meaningful and important contributions to prevent and respond to Islamophobia and make public spaces safer, supporting the municipality's ability to build safe, involved, and inclusive communities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement took place over several months and consisted of dialogue with nearly 100 Muslim women and girls across HRM in community sessions and individual conversations.

Engagement sessions were led by consultant Rana Zaman, supported by the Public Safety Office and the Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office. Insights from the engagements will also inform the forthcoming municipal Women and Gender Equity Strategy.

Five community conversations were hosted in collaboration with community partners in the following locations:

- Halifax Central Library (with support from the Pakistani Canadian Association of Nova Scotia)
- Kearney Lake Masjid (both a women's and girl's session)
- Dartmouth Masjid (with support from the Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia)
- Al-Barakah Masjid

Further, a follow up session was held in July 2023 to share the "What We Heard Report" with participants, discuss insights generated across engagements and for staff to understand if the perspectives captured were accurate. This session was attended by 27 participants.

Please see Attachment 2 for the consultant's "What We Heard Report", which includes details of the engagements, insights and direction shared by Muslim women and girls in these community engagement sessions.

Staff also consulted the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission as part of the research for this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

As [stated by](#) United Nations (UN) Women, climate change has devastating social, cultural, economic, health and human rights impacts that disproportionately impact women and girls, especially those who are most marginalized.

Further, climate change and natural disasters are, “serious aggravator(s) of the different forms of [violence against women and girls] VAWG.” Their research shows that during climate events and natural disasters women, girls and gender-diverse residents who are already more likely to be subjected to violence are at a heightened risk.

Preventing and responding to gender-based and other forms of violence, such as Islamophobia, is necessary to ensure greater equity and safety for women, girls and gender-diverse residents in times of heightened vulnerability caused by climate events. Simultaneously, climate prevention, mitigation and response efforts that take into consideration the experiences of diverse women, girls and gender-diverse residents can, by extension, prevent further violence.

ALTERNATIVES

No alternatives have been identified in this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1- Jurisdictional Scan

Attachment 2- Consultant’s “What We Heard Report”

Attachment 3- Research Summary

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Jurisdictional Scan- Canadian Municipalities' Responses to Combat Islamophobia

Location	Municipal response
Quebec City	<p>Following the 2017 attack on the Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City that took the lives of 6 congregation members, former Mayor Régis Labeaume worked with the local Muslim community to find a city owned space to create a cemetery where Muslims could bury their family members without having to travel to Montreal or Sherbrooke where the nearest Muslim cemetery was located.</p> <p>In June 2021, Quebec City Mayor Regis Labeaume joined London Mayor Ed Holder in praising Parliament's unanimous vote in favour of an Emergency National Action Summit on Islamophobia.</p>
City of Toronto	<p>As part of the Toronto For All¹ initiative, the City of Toronto partnered with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) to create a public education campaign focused on fostering belonging for all and the presence and important contributions of Muslim people and communities across Toronto.</p> <p>In June 2021, Toronto City Council adopted the motion "Standing Against Islamophobia" with the aim of supporting the safety of Muslim communities across the city in several key ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clearly condemning white supremacy, acts of Islamophobia and any politicians and governments who promote hate and restating the City's commitment to an inclusive and welcoming city for all.• Publicly expressing condolences to family, friends and communities impacted by acts of hate and Islamophobia, in Toronto and across Canada• Working with all levels of government and other institutions to end hate-motivated speech and crimes by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Denouncing the Quebec Charter of Values as it is inherently biased toward people of faith and in particular Muslim women for its ban on the hijab and other head coverings○ Calling upon the federal government to introduce and strengthen laws to address online hate speech including white supremacy and the hateful materials targeting minority groups, including Muslims○ Calling on the provincial government to reinstate anti-racism funding○ Urging provincial crown attorneys to pursue justice in acts of hate against Muslim communities to send a message that Islamophobia and other forms of hate are not acceptable and will result in legal consequences• Supporting community led safety initiatives including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ developing public education campaigns○ supporting diverse Muslim organizations to work with community members to build awareness of how to report hate crimes○ creating a community table to develop an anti-hate strategy with anti-Islamophobia as a pillar and review City policies, practices, and services through this lens○ supporting avenues for Muslim youth to influence and guide City decision making, including developing permanent and sustainable funding for the Muslim Youth Fellowship program

¹ Toronto For All is a public education initiative to generate dialogue among Toronto residents about all forms of discrimination and racism, including systemic racism. The campaigns aim to, "share the knowledge and skills needed to identify, question and challenge systemic barriers through a multi-staged conversational approach".

City of Vancouver	<p>In 2020, Mayor and Council declared the Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia (January 29th) an official day of observance in Vancouver.</p> <p>The City of Vancouver website provides information resources about Islamophobia including definitions, recognition that hate motivated attacks against Muslims take place in Vancouver, a public education video produced by the City and links to educational resources such as the Green Square Campaign and islamophobia-is.com.</p> <p>In August 2022, The City of Vancouver updated their Anti-Racism Strategy to incorporate increased awareness on Islamophobia, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and anti-Asian racism.</p>
City of London (Ontario)	<p>Following the terror attack of June 6, 2021, and in response to the City of London Council's Emergent Motion of June 15, 2021, a working group of Muslim communities and key community stakeholders was formed to take concrete action towards ending Islamophobia.</p> <p>In February of 2022, the City of London launched A London for Everyone: An Action Plan to Disrupt Islamophobia. The action plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing funding to create a memorial plaza at the site of the attack that took the lives of the Afzaal family • establishing an Anti-Islamophobia Advisory Council/Circle with appropriate representation of diverse Muslims in London to provide oversight for implementation of the Action Plan • establishing a Muslim Community Liaison Advisor within the Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Division responsible for working with community partners and the City of London to implement the action plan
City of Calgary	<p>In 2016, the City of Calgary signed the National Council of Canadian Muslims Charter for Inclusive Communities.²</p> <p>Alberta Muslim Public Affairs established an Islamophobia hotline in 2016 for residents to report incidents of hate and learn more about counselling services. The City of Calgary has included this resource in communications materials to support inclusive communities and address anti-Muslim hate.</p> <p>In fall of 2020, the City solicited a scoping review from the University of Calgary to examine promising anti-racism practices across municipalities and sectors to inform its work moving forward. The recommendations from this review focus on three key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • institutionalizing anti-racism by mainstreaming anti-racist policies and practices • adopting an anti-racist participatory governance approach • building equitable and vibrant communities by employing a racial equity lens in all City practices and services <p>Subsequently, in 2021 the City of Calgary contracted external organizations to support the development of an Anti-Racism Action Strategy for the city which broadly includes discriminatory practices such as anti-Muslim hate.</p>

² Other signatories of the Charter include the Region of Waterloo, City of Toronto, Oshawa, London, Ontario, the Town of Ajax, and the City of Hamilton.

City of Ottawa The City of Ottawa partnered with the City for all Women Initiative to develop community profiles/snapshots for municipalities. These profiles provide insight and research into the lived experiences of diverse Muslim communities living in Ottawa and beyond.

Together, they are exploring these intersections and providing specific resources, multimedia, and information to municipal staff to better understand the lived experiences of Muslim communities, with a special focus on Muslim women's safety and people who wear Niqab.

The council of City of Ottawa approved their first [Anti-Racism Strategy](#) in June 2022. It was a five-year plan to identify and remove barriers in City policies, program and services to achieve racial equity. The Strategy includes a dedicated section on Islamophobia and notes the compounding experiences of discrimination often experienced by Muslim women and youth in Ottawa.

The strategy has 28 recommendations and 132 actions, including to:

- ensure equitable opportunities for Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities to participate in the City's governance and decision-making processes
- establish foundational and ongoing learning to develop racially responsive leadership
- work with Indigenous and racialized youth and external partners, including community agencies, grassroots groups, other governments and businesses, to create and sustain leadership opportunities
- increase culturally appropriate and responsive supports in the workplace for Indigenous, Black and other racialized children

City of Hamilton In 2020, the City of Hamilton released [20 draft recommendations](#) from a consultation process with equity-seeking groups with lived experience of discrimination as part of the City's [Hate Prevention and Mitigation Initiative](#).

These recommendations include:

- investment in public campaigns that demonstrate the City's commitment to anti-hate, including ways to intervene when you see hate incidents occurring
- partnering with community organizations to develop educational curriculum for young people about justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging
- investing in placemaking initiatives that encourage intergenerational and diverse community interactions
- firmly condemning of hate activities by the City
- leveraging municipal regulations to respond to hate, beginning on City property and extending beyond this where legally possible
- developing a Hate Incident Community Mapping Mechanism to better track and collect data about hate incidents happening in the city
- building a coordinated community reporting mechanism for incidents of hate
- embracing community-led responses to harm

In August 2021, Council voted to direct staff to prepare a report focused on options and action that could be taken to address the public display of any racist, hateful, offensive, and insensitive emblems in Hamilton.

City of Edmonton In 2021, the City of Edmonton created an [Anti-Racism Advisory Committee](#) to raise awareness, catalyze action on anti-racism in Edmonton, and provide advice to Council regarding community perspectives on issues relating to racism.

The City of Edmonton also offers [Anti-Racism grants](#) that support youth, non-profits and local grassroots organizations to develop anti-racism projects and events.

In March of 2021, the City's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee held a [discussion](#) on potential City responses to racism and hate against Black Muslim women. Some potential municipal responses that arose from this conversation were:

- bringing forth a motion to review the City of Edmonton's [public places bylaw](#) to be amended to address racism, Islamophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender
- further consultation with Black Muslim women
- engage with Black Muslim women groups and encourage them to apply to the Anti-Racism Grants Program

Later that year, the Committee [released a statement](#) on the attacks of Black Muslim women in public which was shared with City Council, City of Edmonton Administration and residents through the media.

In February 2022, The City of Edmonton approved their [Anti Racism Strategy](#). The main focuses of the strategy are:

- addressing hate, violence and supporting affected communities
 - championing anti-racism and anti-violence initiatives to the provincial and federal government to secure support and resources
 - working with partners to supporting anti-racist initiatives and responses
-

CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR MUSLIM WOMEN AND GIRLS

Co-created with the
HRM Public Safety Office



2023
Consultant Report
Rana Zaman

Background

In December 2021, Haneen Al Noman, a member of the Women’s Advisory Committee of Halifax, made a presentation to the Halifax Regional Council about the experiences of visibly Muslim women in Halifax and actions other municipalities are taking to support the safety of Muslim women.

In response to Haneen’s presentation, Regional Council made a motion directing municipal staff to look further into what the municipality can do to combat anti-Muslim hate and racism, particularly with respect to Muslim women.

At the same time, HRM’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office is leading a process, alongside community partners, to create a Women and Gender Equity Strategy for the municipality that will aim to reduce gender inequality for women, girls, gender diverse and non-binary residents.

The insights outlined in this “What We Heard” report came directly from the input of Muslim women and girls and are meant to inform both municipal initiatives. This report includes voices of Muslim women and girls from various backgrounds and areas in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). It is the participants’ hope that their contributions will lead to very much-needed change to build a safer municipality.



Photo 1: Halifax Public Library session

The Consultant

Rana Zaman is an award-winning community advocate, a former delegate to the United Nations for Canada's Voice of Women for Peace, a TEDx presenter and a volunteer on several boards. She works at the grassroots level with marginalized communities including new immigrants/migrants, helping with various issues such as poverty, feminism, intersectionality, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, human rights, justice and bullying. She has spoken at schools and colleges about Islam, racism, bullying and the challenges and opportunities facing immigrants.

The Project

In July 2022, I was hired as a consultant by staff in the Public Safety Office to lead the community engagement process that would inform this report. I have worked closely with Public Safety Office staff throughout this project to engage with various partners in Muslim communities in HRM, plan engagement sessions designed to meet the needs of Muslim women and girls and communicate what we heard from these sessions so these insights may be applied by the municipality to make tangible policy, program, and service changes.

My work as a consultant included:

- Making recommendations to HRM staff regarding the diverse organizations representing Muslim communities in HRM, contacting partners, and making connections to inform this project.
- Engaging members of the community through individual phone calls, during social events and prayer sessions. A lot of background communication was required to ensure all parties understood the purpose and intention of these sessions and why it was important for their voices and perspectives to be included.
- Worked closely with PSO staff to build trust with the various Muslim organizations, tailoring the community engagement sessions to meet the needs of each group involved.
- Planning and facilitating each community engagement session.
- Preparing this “what we heard” report to capture the key insights and takeaways shared by community members in both individual conversations and community engagement sessions.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the HRM staff who worked with me at every step for their professionalism and genuine efforts to make this endeavour successful.

Thank you also to the community partners, organizations and masjids that were instrumental in organizing, hosting, and supporting these efforts.

Most of all, I extend my deep gratitude to the women and girls who shared their stories, perspectives, and ideas for change. Your contributions and commitment to making Halifax safer for all pave the way for safer, more equitable and just communities.

Community Engagement Sessions

Overview

From October 2022 to January 2023, we engaged with around 100 Muslim women and girls living in Halifax.

Community engagement sessions were held at different locations throughout the municipality to encourage diverse voices from different backgrounds to participate. We are grateful to have had the support of the following organizations that co-hosted the sessions in their spaces. Without their support, the voices of these Muslim women and girls would not have been heard and thus, this report would not have been possible.

- Nova Scotia Islamic Community Centre (NSICC) (Kearney Lake Masjid)
 - Two sessions—one for youth and one for women
 - This session included mostly Arabic speakers



Photo 2: Kearney Lake Masjid session

- Islamic Association of Nova Scotia (IANS) (Dartmouth Masjid)
 - Many South Asian women were represented in this group



Photo 3: Dartmouth Masjid session

- Halifax Central Library, co-hosted by the Pakistani Canadian Association of Nova Scotia (PCANS)
 - This session included the most diverse Muslim women of various backgrounds
- Masjid Al-Barakah Islamic Centre
 - Many newcomer and refugee women were included in this session

The masjids and community partners who hosted these sessions were critical to the engagements. The various organizations hosted us in their spaces, created and distributed posters and information to their networks, ensured Muslim women and girls in their communities knew about the opportunity and helped us craft sessions that would meet the needs of each group.

The Public Safety Office provided honorariums for engagement session participants to compensate them for their time and expertise. Funding was provided for babysitting and transportation in order to reduce barriers for participants.

Each session included a facilitator, active listener, note taker and in some cases, co-facilitator. HRM staff were present at each session. Great care was taken to ensure the spaces would be safe and active listeners were there to interject when and where needed in the conversations, especially when emotions due to trauma were coming to the surface.

Muslim Communities Are Not a Monolith

We strived to engage as many Muslim women and girls from diverse communities as possible with the time and financial resources available to us¹, however, it's important to make clear that the insights shared in these sessions are of those who attended and do not represent the perspectives of *all* Muslim women and girls in Halifax.

The broader Halifax Muslim community is made up of many diverse and vibrant communities, each with its own customs, practices, norms, and experiences. Some Muslim women and girls were born and raised in Halifax, with families who have called this place home for generations. Other Muslim women and girls moved to Halifax from other Canadian cities, and others from many different places around the world. The diverse Muslim communities in Halifax are from various countries, ethnicities, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds.

There are approximately seven masjids in HRM and several organizations with many Muslim members, including the Pakistani Canadian Association of Nova Scotia (PCANS), Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia (BDCANS) and others.

It was important that the engagement sessions did not focus on any one masjid or organization but rather, engaged Muslim women and girls from all over HRM by connecting with these various organizations to be as inclusive and to empower as many voices as possible.

Invitations were sent to various organizations and masjids to engage in the process. It's important to note that the diversity of women and girls in the sessions was based on the congregants of each masjid and organization that responded.

It was also important to host at least one session in a public space—one where Muslim women and girls who are not part of a masjid or formal organization could feel welcome to share.

Centering Care, Trust, and Safety

This initiative wouldn't have been possible if we didn't centre care, trust, and safety at each step.

Foremost, the engagements needed to reflect the diverse voices and experiences of women and girls in the Muslim community in order to have meaningful dialogue and input for the report. Dedicated time was required at the beginning of the initiative to build trust with organizations, groups and masjids that were interested in collaborating to bring this initiative to life.

¹ Based on the format of engagements, project budget and ensuring the necessary supports were in place for each session, we set the number of participants per session at 20.



Photo 4: Participants and consultants at Al Barakah Masjid

As a consultant on this initiative, I went to social events, made phone calls, and spoke with interested participants to share the importance and significance of the project for Muslim women. Because the Public Safety Office did not already have established relationships with these organizations, conversations to share this information and follow up was a critical step.

Many folks expressed wariness about being involved in the sessions—they had questions about the process, the input they would have in the engagement, the budget involved, details of the report and the intended outcomes of these conversations. Some expressed how past engagements with governments didn't amount to change in their eyes and they felt it would be a waste of their time. I stressed to them that this was a sincere attempt by HRM to hear the voices and experiences of Muslim women and girls and that the municipality was truly committed to responding to the insights shared through these engagements by implementing practices and policies to make public spaces safer for Muslim women and girls.

There were also steps taken to establish safety and care for participants in the sessions:

- Participants were asked to register for sessions. This allowed us to send the discussion questions ahead of time and include important information about logistics and plans for the sessions. We intentionally provided the questions ahead of time so participants could decide whether they

felt comfortable sharing those topics and allowed them time to prepare, minimizing any trauma that might arise when discussing very difficult topics.

- Participants were informed that notes would be taken and photos captured with permission, allowing participants to choose to stay anonymous if they wished.
- Each session started with an activity to set the “rules of engagement.” The participants brainstormed the group agreements they felt were needed to be in place to feel safe and comfortable to share their experiences. These agreements always included mutual respect and confidentiality.

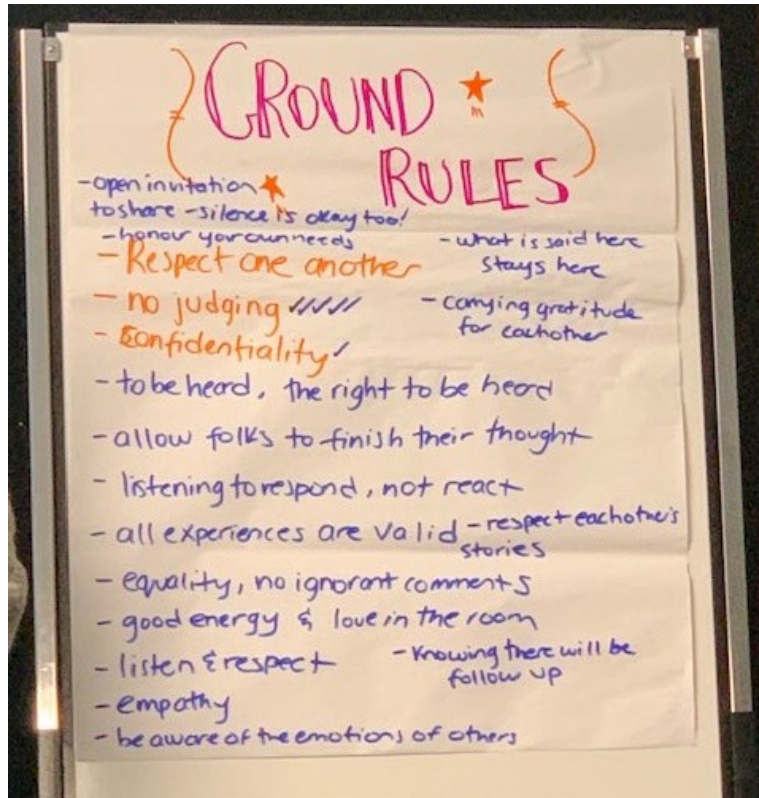


Photo 5: The rules participants brainstormed

Learnings and Important Considerations for Future Engagement

Despite the many countries, cultures, languages, and socio-economic experiences represented in these sessions, it became very clear that many of the women and girls we engaged with shared similar stories and insights.

During these sessions, it was evident there is trauma in the community and further resources need to be allocated to help process this trauma. The municipality should allocate more resources in the future to understand and respond to the struggles and barriers Muslim women and girls are facing.

The feedback from these engagements must be taken seriously by the municipality. HRM must make a genuine effort to implement changes in policies and increase resources to honour the efforts and relieved trauma the participants went through for this report.

Further, the participants and supporting organizations must be made aware of the importance of their input and any changes implemented based on their recommendations and suggestions. The women need to feel they are heard, seen and that they matter. In a patriarchal society, this type of care, respect, and nurturing is lacking for women.

The following are other key insights for future engagements:

- Due to a certain degree of difficulty in starting these sessions and in the spirit of inclusiveness, it's important for the municipality to recognize that there is no singular organization or masjid that can represent the diverse Muslim population in HRM in its entirety.
- Many participants noted that they had much more to share and the sessions were not long enough to address the level of Islamophobia, bigotry, racism, and hatred they have suffered. Many of the participants gave feedback that there should be more and longer sessions to allow for a greater number of participants and adequate time to discuss these issues.

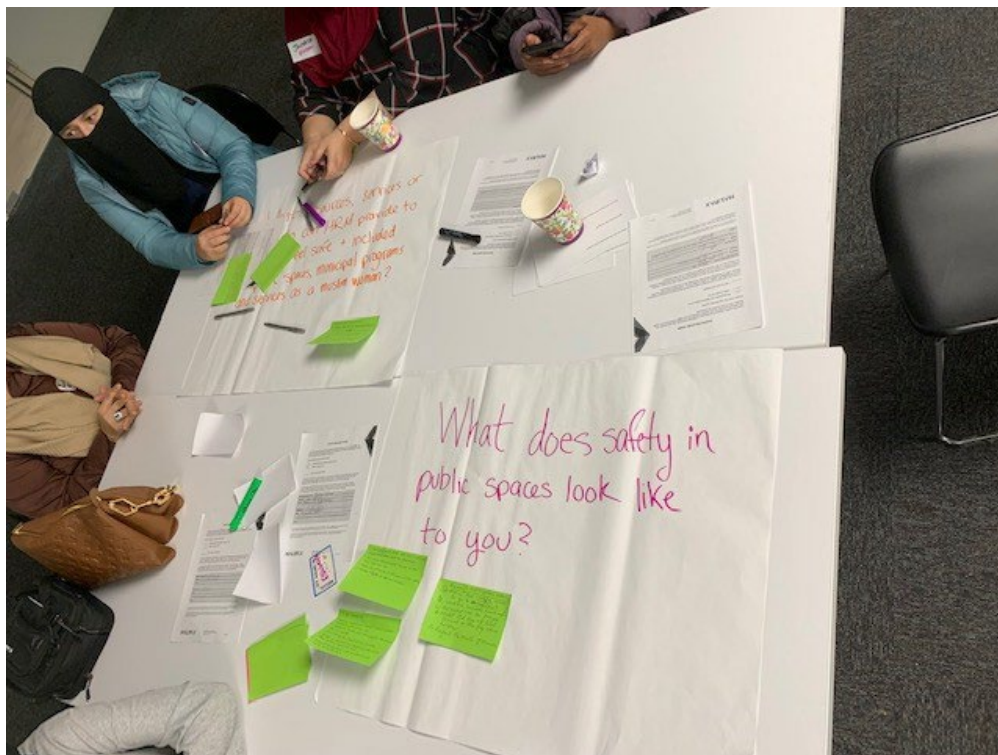


Photo 6: Participants brainstorm what safety in public spaces looks like to them

- All work contributed by Muslim women and girls should be treated with the same level of respect and importance as any other women's work. Historically, women of colour have been underpaid for the same work done by their counterparts. The municipality needs to be conscientious about acknowledging the work, time, insights and experiences of Muslim women and girls who contribute to engagements like this and any resulting projects in an equitable manner.
- HRM must prioritize continuing to build strong relationships and positive communication networks with Muslim women of diverse backgrounds and congregations, not just from organizations but from grassroots activism and those who show active leadership in their

communities. Muslim women's voices must continue to be heard on issues that significantly impact their lives, well-being, and communities.

- Having women organizing and leading these sessions went a long way to creating trusted and safe spaces. Future engagements must continue to be women-led. Most masjids and Muslim organizations in Halifax have a ladies' committee. It's important to involve members of these committees to organize sessions that involve the engagement of Muslim women. They are at the heart of their organizations and connected to the board members and congregants.
- It's important to continue providing resources to make sessions accessible including transportation, refreshments, and caregiving support. Also, participants were appreciative of the honorariums provided.
- All future sessions should take into consideration the timing of the sessions to allow a greater number of participants such as working mothers, those observing prayer times, student schedules, etc.



Photo 7: Participants at the Halifax Public Library

Recommendations for Action

These sessions, my personal experiences and interactions with Muslim women as a community advocate over the years affirm that Muslim women and girls often feel unsafe in public spaces in Halifax. Due to the rise of Islamophobia, there have been increased attacks nationally and locally on Muslim women and girls.

For Muslim women to feel safer, they need to feel that they are just as important and valued as other members of society and that they are welcomed in the environments they are in at any given time. There should be an overall sense of belonging and inclusiveness in all spaces.

The following are important areas of action that arose in all the engagement sessions:

- The municipality must support greater representation of Muslim women in all municipal staff positions. This must include leadership and decision-making positions, as well as various roles in public spaces (such as bus drivers, library staff, police officers, firefighters, and staff in community and recreation centres). When hiring Muslim women, the organizations and individuals that participated in these engagements, as well as other Muslim organizations, networks, and masjids, should be made aware of these positions.
- HRM employees should have training, tools, and strategies to intervene and diffuse situations of Islamophobia and racism, providing immediate support to the person impacted so they are not further harmed and do not feel alone in their experience. Participants shared countless examples of when they had experienced harm in public spaces and no one stepped in to support them. For example, a participant shared an experience of a young woman being attacked on a bus and her hijab was ripped off and no one assisted her, including the bus driver.
- Training should be established to support HRM employees to serve diverse populations they'll be engaging with and how to make them feel welcome and safe. This education should include information about counteracting negative and discriminatory stereotypes of Muslim people.
- Efforts must be made to educate the general population on the importance of respecting diverse faiths, cultures, and races.
- There should be a zero-tolerance policy for acts of discrimination, racism, and physical and verbal violence in municipal public spaces, or any other spaces for that matter. This policy must also be applied to municipal staff. Some participants shared experiences of municipal staff espousing Islamophobic and discriminatory views, and not knowing how to report these incidents to the municipality. There should be swift repercussions for perpetrators of violence and accountability from those in positions of power who can prevent these attacks from taking place.
- A non-police phone number/reporting system should be established for residents to report experiences of violence and Islamophobia. When reporting an instance of hate or discrimination perpetrated by municipal staff, this system should allow those reporting to send this information to the municipality for follow-up.
- Many participants shared that when they have reported instances of hate, sexism, and Islamophobia, they are not always taken seriously and feel often there isn't meaningful, trauma-informed follow-up to their reports. Reports of physical and verbal attacks against Muslim women and girls must always be taken seriously by police and other frontline responders and consequences enforced for the perpetrators of violence.

- Acts of Islamophobia must be taken seriously, alongside other forms of racism and discrimination such as antisemitism, anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism. In some cases, participants shared experiences where they were the target of multiple forms of discrimination at once.

Throughout the engagements, participants shared many concrete recommendations for actions the municipality should take to make public spaces safer for Muslim women and girls. Specific recommendations can be found in the appendix of the main report to the council.



Photo 8: Participants socializing during break

Conclusion

In conclusion, the engagements outlined in this report are the first important step in the municipality's efforts to engage Muslim women and girls regarding their experiences, perspectives, insights, desires and needs for safer public spaces. The Muslim women and girls who engaged in this process have contributed a great deal of vulnerability, openness and hope in sharing their stories—it is critical that these experiences not be shared in vain and that impactful action result from this report.

Islamophobia, racism, hatred, and bigotry exist in all our systems, communities, and at all levels of government—even within the municipality. It's critical that HRM make a sincere commitment to eliminate these forms of discrimination and violence by listening to the many voices experiencing these issues and implementing the much-needed policies, changes and practices needed for creating safer public spaces for all.

HRM is growing at a phenomenal pace, diversity is increasing and with this, new challenges to safety and well-being will arise. It's critical that the municipality acts now to address current issues of safe spaces for Muslim women and girls and works closely with communities to address future challenges. HRM can be a leader and shining example of fostering public spaces and communities that are safe for all.

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Appendix 1: Facilitation Plan and Guide

These are the questions that were sent to participants after registration and before the sessions:

1. What does safety in public spaces mean to you? What can HRM do to help you feel safe and included in public spaces as a Muslim woman?
2. What can the municipality do to combat anti-Muslim hate and Islamophobia?
3. “When I imagine a municipality that has achieved fairness, well-being and equality for all women, I imagine...”
4. What barriers have you experienced to accessing municipal services and programs?
5. What resources, services, or supports can the Municipality provide to help make this vision a reality?

Template Facilitation Guide for Community Conversations

Purpose	Activity	Speaking Notes
	Mingling	Have photo consent form on front table
Welcome and Introductions		<p>Welcome, thank you to partners and collaborators.</p> <p>Introductions—facilitators, note-takers, active listeners</p> <p>Shares about active listeners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We also want to introduce ____, who will be supporting as an active listener. We know conversations about safety and well-being can be difficult and sometimes bring up pain and trauma. ____ will listen intently and is prepared to support anyone who may need it. If you need to step out of the room or take a break, ____ will follow you to make sure you are doing okay.
<p>Group Agreement</p> <p>To set shared expectations for the group so people feel comfortable and able to share openly</p>	<p>Flip chart paper with some ideas already written down</p>	<p>What rules are we going to set for ourselves for this session so that folks can be comfortable to share openly?</p> <p>Potential agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share the air—everyone has a chance to share their insights ● Respect ● Confidentiality

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take care of yourself—only share what you feel comfortable sharing ● Your experience is important and valid and all voices are important in this conversation <p>Ask the group if they have anything to add, change</p>
Privacy	Powerpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What you share today will not be attributed to you as an individual. The insights you provide will be compiled and included in the report, but your name won't be shared. If you would like to have a direct quote included in the report with your name attached, please approach us at the end of the conversation and we can make sure we record your quote to be included. ● Keeping people's information in a thoughtful way, our duty as a municipality to be mindful of this ● If you'd like your name attached to a quote, you are more than welcome—just let us know.
<p>Why are we here today? What will the insights I share influence?</p> <p>Explanation of municipal services and spaces</p>	Powerpoint	<p>We have heard from the community that we, as the municipality, must do more to ensure that municipal public spaces are safe for Muslim women.</p> <p>As a municipality, we have jurisdiction over parks, recreation centres, libraries, sidewalks, transit, police, fire services, and city hall and we are a big employer in this region (go through the PowerPoint).</p> <p>We know that Muslim women encounter sexism, racism, Islamophobia, exclusion, and other forms of discrimination in these public spaces. We also know that the municipality can implement programs, policies, and changes to affirm that Muslim women belong in these spaces and should feel welcome and free to use and experience municipal spaces and places without fear for their safety.</p> <p>What you share with us today will be included in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Women and Gender Equity Strategy that the municipality is currently developing. This is a strategy that will determine what steps the municipality can take to make municipal services, programs, and spaces more equitable, accessible, and safe for women and gender-diverse folks. ● A report to Regional Council that looks at other municipalities' work around anti-Muslim hate and racism and, based on your feedback, recommends what HRM can do to combat

		anti-Muslim hate and racism, particularly with respect to women. (Brought forward by Haneen Al-Noman to the Women’s Advisory Committee)
Part 1: Safe municipal public spaces	Small group discussions at tables	<p>Questions posted on the wall on flip charts so people can refer to them.</p> <p>Participants at each table take notes on sticky notes so these ideas can be collected and included in the report.</p> <p>What does safety in public spaces look like to you? * Prompt: think about what safety means for you based on all the parts of your identity, and as a Muslim woman 15 mins</p> <p>What resources, services, or supports can HRM provide to help you feel safe and included in public spaces, municipal programs, and services as a Muslim woman? 15 mins</p>
Break		Snacks, bring back to table
	Report back	A representative from each small group reports back the top highlight from each question to the full group
Part 2: Actions municipalities can take to combat Islamophobia		<p>On the walls around the room, there will be pieces of paper with examples of what other municipalities are doing to combat Islamophobia and other examples of what concrete actions could look like.</p> <p>Participants were asked to take 10 minutes to go around the room and look at the examples, putting a 1, 2 and 3 on their top 3 priorities.</p> <p>There was extra paper for people to write ideas if they see it missing.</p>

ATTACHMENT 3

Summary table of findings from research into best practices, local context, and HRM efforts that address Islamophobia

BEST PRACTICES FOR MUNICIPAL ACTIONS TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA ¹	LOCAL CONTEXT: INSIGHTS FROM MUSLIM WOMEN AND GIRLS ON ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA	EXISTING HRM ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA THAT CAN BE BUILT UPON
<p>Elected officials publicly denounce Islamophobia and commit to promoting a municipality that is safe and inclusive for all.</p>	<p>Add the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia (January 29th) to the municipality's recognized list of dates and light City Hall in green every January 29th to support the Green Square Campaign.</p>	<p>Regional Council has taken action toward denouncing Islamophobia through passing the following resolution on January 25, 2022 that the municipality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affirm its continuing support for the rights and freedoms granted and guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; • continue to support building a welcoming Municipality for everyone; and • oppose any legislation that restricts or prohibits these rights and freedoms, including [Quebec's] Bill 21
<p>Experiences of Muslim communities are centered in municipal efforts to dismantle Islamophobia, with a particular focus on ensuring diverse Muslim women's and youth's voices are included.</p>	<p>Increase avenues and reduce barriers for Muslim women and girls to participate in civic life and municipal decision-making.</p>	<p>All municipal boards and committees are open to diverse residents of the municipality and efforts are made to disseminate information about board and committee recruitment to diverse communities across the municipality.</p> <p>HRP has engaged with Muslim leaders in Halifax to learn more about the intersections between race, religion, and gender and how hate incidents and crimes impact Black Muslim women. They are integrating feedback from these consultations into efforts to reduce barriers to reporting and to better support communities who have experienced hate crimes. They also continue to build connections between police and community organizations serving Muslim women so that officers can refer residents to these services when appropriate.</p> <p>HRP also continues to develop its Hate Crime Unit (HCU)—HRP's primary means of combatting hate. The HCU works to raise awareness of the unit as an avenue for individuals and communities to report hate crimes and incidents, builds relationships with communities to understand their experiences and barriers to reporting and leads training for police recruits and officers on hate crimes and the impact on communities.</p>

¹ Based on the Calls to Action for Municipalities from the Emergency National Action Summit on Islamophobia and jurisdictional scan conducted for this report

BEST PRACTICES FOR MUNICIPAL ACTIONS TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA	LOCAL CONTEXT: INSIGHTS FROM MUSLIM WOMEN AND GIRLS ON ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA	EXISTING HRM ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA THAT CAN BE BUILT UPON
Locally-relevant anti-Islamophobia initiatives are adequately resourced and supported.	<p>Explore the development of funding for community partners to co-design, lead and implement anti-Islamophobia initiatives.</p> <p>Support community-led programming that brings together Muslim and non-Muslim communities to learn, build connections and foster strong relationships.</p>	<p>Community initiatives to address Islamophobia would be eligible to apply for funding through specific streams of the municipality's Community Grants program.</p> <p>Black-led community initiatives to address Islamophobia and Anti-Black Racism would be eligible to apply for funding through the municipality's proposed Anti-Black Racism grants program.</p>
Adequate educational material and public resources are available to dismantle Islamophobia.	<p>Increase representation of Muslim women and girls in public spaces by including their images, voices, and stories in municipal communications and marketing materials.</p> <p>Build public knowledge of how to recognize and respond to Islamophobia, debunk harmful myths about Muslim people and understand the diverse Muslim communities in HRM through public education campaigns/resources.</p>	<p>Halifax Public Libraries continues to enhance its collection of materials in English and other languages commonly spoken by Muslim communities, including resources relevant to Muslim women and girls.</p> <p>HRP is creating educational resources and exploring development of a campaign regarding hate crimes, hate incidents and reporting methods. HRP works closely with community organizations to disseminate this information.</p>
Viable, culturally relevant alternatives to policing exist to support Muslim residents impacted by Islamophobia.	<p>Explore the development of a third-party/non-police reporting system for experiences of harassment, violence and hate incidents that considers the diverse needs and experiences of residents, including Muslim women and girls.</p> <p>Provide training and resources to municipal employees who support and interact with the public to recognize and respond to incidents and reports of Islamophobia with gender-responsive approaches.</p>	<p>Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (D&I/ANSAIO), Community Safety, Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency (HRFE) all have several training and capacity building initiatives underway or under development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asset maps for newcomer youth • intercultural competency training, including specific training for staff supporting newcomer youth • Trauma Informed Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training • GBA+ training • bystander intervention training • hate crime and hate incident training for police and other HRM Business Units • training for HRFE staff in anti-racism and GBA+ approaches
Actions to address Islamophobia are embedded in existing municipal anti-racism, inclusion, community safety and wellbeing strategies, plans, policies, and practices.	Ensure actions to address Islamophobia are reflected in safety plans, as well as anti-racism and anti-hate efforts.	<p>The municipality has several key frameworks, strategies and plans that address issues of safety, equity, diversity, and inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity & Inclusion Framework • Anti-Black Racism Strategy • Diversity & Inclusion Champions Table • Public Safety Strategy • Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Program

BEST PRACTICES FOR MUNICIPAL ACTIONS TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA	LOCAL CONTEXT: INSIGHTS FROM MUSLIM WOMEN AND GIRLS ON ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA	EXISTING HRM ACTIVITIES ADDRESSING ISLAMOPHOBIA THAT CAN BE BUILT UPON
<p>Users of municipal public spaces, services and programs are representative of the diversity of residents of HRM, including Muslim women and girls.</p>	<p>Ensure zero-tolerance for acts of Islamophobia in municipal public spaces.</p> <p>Establish initiatives that support Muslim women and girls to feel safer accessing public transit.</p> <p>Establish efforts to support Muslim women and girls to feel included in aquatic and recreation programs.</p> <p>Ensure the needs of Muslim women and girls are considered and reflected in the design of municipal facilities.</p> <p>Ensure resources related to resident safety and well-being are readily accessible in the diversity of languages spoken by residents in HRM (including those languages most spoken by Muslim communities).</p>	<p>D&I/ANSAIO has supported Property, Fleet & Environment and Parks and Recreation to assess and advise changes to some swimming facilities, aquatic and recreational programming to reduce barriers to access for Muslim women and girls.</p> <p>HRFE works closely with Ummah Masjid to build strong relationships between community members, firefighters, and crews. These efforts include community events, information sessions and educational visits to support new firefighters and fire service leaders to better understand Muslim communities and their needs.</p> <p>The municipality is developing a multilingual policy that will guide the translation and interpretation of municipal resources and materials.</p> <p>HRP is working with D&I to fill interpretation gaps in service provision.</p>
<p>HRM staff and volunteers are reflective of the communities they serve, and municipal workplaces are welcoming to Muslim employees and volunteers, including Muslim women and girls.</p>	<p>Establish efforts to recruit, hire and retain Muslim women to support their representation in various municipal staff roles, such as those in Police, Fire, Parks & Recreation, Transit and Halifax Public Libraries.</p>	<p>HRFE and HRP currently engage in relationship building and targeted recruitment with Muslim communities. This includes supporting Muslim community led events and initiatives. HRP has held recruitment information sessions for Muslim women and disseminated recruitment materials through Muslim women's communications networks in Halifax.</p> <p>D&I Advisors can provide guidance to Business Units on how to make workplaces more welcoming and inclusive to Muslim employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • converting spaces into prayer rooms (or offering quiet, appropriate spaces that can be used for prayer) • offering opportunities for teams to learn about Islamic practices and customs • ensuring the needs of employees are accommodated during regular prayer times and important observances like Ramadan