



A London for Everyone

An Action Plan to Disrupt Islamophobia

Table Of Contents

1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Methodology	2
3.0 Key Insights	3
3.1 Muslim Communities	3
3.2 Community Based and Public Sector Organizations	3
3.3 Media	4
3.4 One-on-One Conversations	5
4.0 Remembering, Honouring, and Highlighting Muslims in London	5
Recommendations for the City of London	5
4.1 Remembering and Honouring Our London Family	5
4.2 Highlighting and Honouring the Contributions of London Muslim Communities	5
5.0 Anti-Islamophobia Action Plan	6
Recommendations for the City of London	6
5.1 Advocacy, Legislation, and Public Policy	6
5.2 Education and Awareness	7
5.3 Programs and Services	7
5.4 Accountability and Implementation	8
Recommendations for Community Based and Public Sector Organizations	8
5.5 Advocacy	8
5.6 Education and Awareness	8
5.7 Programs and Services	8
5.8 Internal Policies and Practices	10
6.0 Conclusion	11
7.0 Appendices	12

1.0 Introduction

On June 6, 2021, members of the Afzaal family were murdered in an act of Islamophobic hate. This act was set against a larger landscape of hate and systemic exclusion which continue to marginalize Muslims and other racialized peoples both in London and across Canada.

In response to the hateful act, on June 15, 2021, City Council directed Civic Administration to:

- a) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to work with the local Muslim community, the Community Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, and stakeholders to help end Islamophobia and report back on the outcomes of that work, including the identification of a source of funding, if applicable, to properly fund initiatives to assist with the implementation of these initiatives;
- b) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to seek input from the Muslim community to determine appropriate means by which The Corporation of the City of London can remember and honour the victims;
- c) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to work with the local Muslim community and report back on how The Corporation of the City of London can highlight and honour the contributions of the London Muslim community; and,
- d) the Municipal Council SUPPORTS the call for a National Action Summit on Islamophobia and stands ready to participate in any Summit or related intergovernmental effort to dismantle all forms of Islamophobia. (AS AMENDED)

In response to that direction, staff from the Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Division created an Anti-Islamophobia Working Group to consult with Muslim communities and community based and public sector organizations.

Since the Working Group was formed, progress has been made, including:

1. On December 16, 2021, Minister Ahmed Hussen brought forward a motion in the House of Commons to support the appointment of a federal Special Envoy on Islamophobia (mentioned in NCCM #19 (Appendix A.1) and Hikma #4.1 (Appendix A.3)).
2. On December 21, 2021, Council declared its opposition to Quebec's Bill 21, including providing a one-time payment of \$100,000 in financial support to the joint legal challenges of Bill 21 by the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the World Sikh Organization and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (mentioned in NCCM #29 and Hikma #1.8).

3. On January 10, 2022, the Corporate Services Committee voted in favour of proclaiming January 29 as the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia.

Through the insights of the Working Group as well as the work being done by the Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Division of the City of London, it is clear that the City and community based and public sector organizations acknowledge the existence of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism in London. There is a need to disrupt Islamophobia in all its forms as a step towards dismantling all acts of hate. This report includes an action plan for the City and for community based and public sector organizations to disrupt Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism.

2.0 Methodology

A series of large group discussions (6 in total) were held with Muslim communities, community based and public sector organizations, and representatives of London media. In addition, one-on-one conversations (25+) were held with community based and public sector organizations and individual members of Muslim communities.

In Session 1, Muslim communities shared their experiences of Islamophobia and their concerns about how it is being addressed in London. In Session 2, representatives from community based and public sector organizations spoke of the work already being done to disrupt Islamophobia, brainstormed future initiatives, and identified areas of collaboration. In Session 3, Muslim communities were joined by community based and public sector organizations to align community concerns with future initiatives and ensure that concerns are being addressed with clear actions. In Session 4, London-based media representatives discussed their role in reinforcing Islamophobia and how they can change the narrative about Muslims. In Session 5, representatives of Muslim communities identified initiatives to remember and honour Our London Family, and to highlight Muslim contributions in London. Session 6 was a report back to the Working Group to review the draft recommendations and elicit feedback and endorsement.

Sessions 1 to 4 began with an overview of the multiple dimensions of Islamophobia, which manifest at both individual and structural levels (Beydoun, Khaled A. (2019). *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear*. University of California Press.) This common understanding of Islamophobia formed the basis of the discussions.

One-on-one conversations with community based and public sector organizations and individual members of Muslim communities focused on hearing about current and future initiatives to disrupt Islamophobia, resources required, and how the City of London can provide support.

3.0 Key Insights

3.1 Muslim Communities

Overwhelmingly, Muslims want to be believed and validated when they share experiences of hate that occur on a daily basis - specifically from within the Muslim community, from the broader community, and from authoritative figures such as the London Police Service. Many participants expressed their pain and frustration about the lack of trust in authority figures, the institutions they represent, and the systems they operate within. Further, some participants felt that the institutions they are told to trust are the same ones perpetuating systemic bias against Muslims. An acknowledgement that Islamophobia exists in London, and disproportionately affects Muslim women, is an essential first step towards rebuilding trust and will provide the foundation for further initiatives to disrupt Islamophobia. Many participants noted that Muslim youth were not represented adequately in the responses to the terror attack, and that these youth voices must be central to future efforts.

Participants emphasized the need for greater education at all levels, with a focus on integrating an anti-racism and anti-oppression lens (including anti-Islamophobia) within education systems. Additionally, they articulated the need for sustainable public support, safer spaces (both in person and online), concrete actions by allies, and accountability (by media, the City, and allies). Communities noted the need for a deeper understanding of the diversities within Islam, including the intersectional identities of Muslims, and recognition of the contributions of Muslims in London. Participants noted their desire to build solidarity with other equity-deserving groups in London in order to work together to dismantle any and all forms of hate within their communities. There is a high level of emotion still reverberating within Muslim communities. Participants expressed pain, anger, fear, and frustration about ongoing acts of hate and systemic exclusion, noting that Islamophobia cannot be disrupted by words and good intentions alone, but by intentional and collective action.

Muslim communities were also consulted on how to remember and honour Our London Family as well as how to highlight the contributions of Muslims in London. Several ideas were proposed, spawning further conversation with representatives from the City who are working on implementing some of those recommendations.

3.2 Community Based and Public Sector Organizations

Community based and public sector organizations acknowledged that Islamophobia exists and has a disproportionate impact on Muslim women. Participants recognized that their organizations have a role to play in disrupting Islamophobia, both for the constituents they serve and for London at large. Each organization is at a different stage of their journey: some are exploring and understanding Islamophobia at a deeper level while others have already begun planning future initiatives to address Islamophobia and to provide support to Muslims. However, organizations also

expressed challenges and concerns: the need for guidance and insight from Muslim communities and other equity-deserving groups, support in actualizing policies and ideas, sustainability of funding, and the pressure of multiple and competing priorities. Participants echoed the need for greater education at all levels, of which one solution could be training specific to Islamophobia. Finally, participants expressed a strong desire for an ongoing forum to share best practices and ensure consistency of messaging and approach when undertaking anti-Islamophobia work. They hope that the City of London will lead this work and continue to provide opportunities for organizations to network, connect, and share expertise.

3.3 Media

Members of the local London media were invited to a separate session designed to discuss the role of media in perpetuating Islamophobia and how to change the narrative of how Muslims are portrayed in the community. Representatives from the London Free Press, 980 CFPL, and CTV were in attendance as well as an independent journalist. A robust and engaging conversation ensued where participants shared common experiences and challenges including a constant tension between being the first to get a news story out and taking the time to reflect on how the story may perpetuate stereotypes and biases. There was an honest conversation about how the media uphold these stereotypical narratives and similarly how they can be agents to dispel and disrupt them.

Attendees identified several strategies they can use to strengthen and highlight the experiences of local Muslims as well as those of other equity-deserving groups. Media representatives identified that they could broaden their relationships with diverse Muslim communities so that the intersectional identities of Muslims are better reflected in media narratives. They also agreed that they could be more intentional about interviewing Muslims for everyday news stories and not only following acts of hate.

They acknowledged the value of weaving the history of Muslims and other equity-deserving groups into the broader Canadian story. One suggestion was for print media to dedicate a column to the topic of Faith, also accessible online, similar to the [Winnipeg Free Press column](#). The group also saw value in creating a space for themselves to meet with other media representatives on a regular basis to collectively navigate some of these issues, share ideas and discuss best practices. Ultimately, the participants recognize that intentionally disrupting bias within the media context is a long but important process and that continued conversations and spaces for reflection will allow them to learn and course correct with humility and grace as needed.

3.4 One-on-One Conversations

The focus of the conversations with community based and public sector organizations was to further understand each organization's commitments to disrupting Islamophobia and where they require additional support, either from the City of London or from other partners. Organizations deeply appreciated the space to continue the conversation and expressed their desire to engage with the City, other partners, and Muslim communities on an ongoing basis. Conversations that took place with local individual members of Muslim communities were to expand on ideas they had presented and initiatives that are already underway and explore how the City of London can offer support.

4.0 Remembering, Honouring, and Highlighting Muslims in London

Recommendations for the City of London

4.1 Remembering and Honouring Our London Family

The City of London to:

- a. Dedicate funding or support, as required, for local community-based anti-Islamophobia initiatives being developed to commemorate the anniversary of the Islamophobic terror attack on an annual basis as per **NCCM Recommendation #56**.
- b. Proclaim June 6 as a Day of Remembrance of Our London Family and implement plans to formally commemorate it.
- c. Light city buildings in green and purple on June 6, 2022 in recognition of Our London Family.
- d. In consultation with members of the family, implement plans for a memorial plaza at the intersection of Hyde Park Road/South Carriage Road. Current plans include a raised flower bed with seating, a memorial plaque, and a small wall. Crosswalks will also be painted purple and green at the intersection to honour Our London Family.
- e. Offer guidance and support to local Muslim youth who have been engaged to work with a local artist, Wajeha Chams, to create a mural on the wall at the intersection. This process will be facilitated through staff support of the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI).
- f. Create a Community Garden in honour of Our London Family who were avid gardeners.

4.2 Highlighting and Honouring the Contributions of London Muslim Communities

The City of London to:

- a. With local community based and public sector organizations such as Museum London and the London Children's Museum, explore the feasibility of bringing the 1001 Inventions exhibition to London in October 2023. 1001 Inventions is a UK based not-for-profit award-winning international science and cultural heritage

organization that raises awareness of the creative golden age of Arab Science. This will be the first time the exhibition will be brought to Canada, offering the City of London a unique opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to highlighting and honouring the contributions of Muslims as per **NCCM Recommendation #59**.

- b. Utilize the Mayor's New Year's Honour List as a mechanism to highlight and honour the contributions of local Muslims in any and all categories as per **NCCM Recommendation #59**.
- c. Consult with the London Muslim Mosque and other organizations as appropriate, to explore other types of public recognition displays which can be actioned for June 2022 as per **NCCM Recommendation #59**.
- a. Consider either fully funding the 1001 Inventions exhibition or exploring funding opportunities through sources such as the National Anti-Racism Fund currently offered through the Canada Race Relations Foundation as per **NCCM Recommendation #56**.
- d. As previously directed by Council, continue its review of all existing commemorative naming policies with an anti-racism, anti-oppression, and intersectional framework, and consider renaming efforts that recognize the contributions of local Muslims who have played important roles within the city.

5.0 Anti-Islamophobia Action Plan

Recommendations for the City of London

The following recommendations refer to actions that the Corporation of the City of London can take to be a thought leader in disrupting Islamophobia and a role model for other municipalities. These recommendations include those submitted by the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) in advance of the National Summit on Islamophobia held in July 2021.

5.1 Advocacy, Legislation, and Public Policy

- a. Endorse the 61 NCCM recommendations and actively advocate with provincial and federal governments to deliver on these recommendations with adequate support and resources.
- b. Develop an implementation plan for Council's consideration by Fall 2022 of the seven NCCM recommendations specific to municipal governments. Those recommendations are listed below and referred to throughout this document and are also included in the NCCM Report (Appendix A.1):
 - i. **#55** Pass municipal street harassment bylaws that are proportional and constitutional, such as the approach now being adopted in Edmonton after an NCCM initiative. Bylaws should also address clearly hateful verbal assaults and give authorities the ability to ticket and fine when necessary.
 - ii. **#56** Municipalities provide dedicated funding for local community-based anti-Islamophobia initiatives.
 - iii. **#57** Mayors should build Anti-Islamophobia Advisory Councils/Circles while ensuring that there is appropriate representation of diverse local Muslim communities.
 - iv. **#58** Municipalities dedicate specific funding for anti-Islamophobia public awareness campaigns.

- v. **#59** Invest in celebrating the history of local Canadian Muslims and initiatives through a concrete program that brings these figures and names to the forefront of local-level recognition. Municipalities should fund events and spaces where their accomplishments are celebrated in a way that clearly shows that Muslims have made real contributions to Canadian society and are far from the violent caricatures that constantly make the news.
- vi. **#60** Redirect funding towards alternative measures to policing in municipal budgets.
- vii. **#61** Develop models for training young Muslim leaders for the future such as the Youth Fellowship program in Toronto.
- c. Refer **NCCM Recommendation #60** to the London Police Services Board for their consideration.
- d. Call on the Province of Ontario to introduce and pass the *Our London Family Act*.
- e. Endorse the submissions for the National Summit on Islamophobia of the Hikma Public Affairs Council.

5.2 Education and Awareness

- a. Provide dedicated funding for local community-based anti-Islamophobia initiatives such as the “OurLondonFamily” website initiative being developed by local community members in collaboration with Fanshawe College students, as per **NCCM Recommendation #56**. This online resource will be a centralized repository for all projects and initiatives dedicated to fighting Islamophobia on a local level.
- b. Dedicate funding for local community-based anti-Islamophobia initiatives for local organizations such as the London Muslim Mosque, the Muslim Resource Centre for Supports and Integration (MRCSSI), London Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP) and the Youth Coalition Combating Islamophobia (YCCI), as per **NCCM Recommendation #56**. The YCCI, is a local youth-led group inspired by friends of the family and is committed to dismantling Islamophobia through awareness initiatives and fundraising.
- c. Explore partnerships and allocate funding accordingly, for a local anti-Islamophobia public awareness campaign as per **NCCM Recommendation #58**.
- d. Proclaim October as Islamic Heritage Month, June 6 as a Day of Remembrance of Our London Family, and January 29 as the National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia.
- e. Work with community based and public sector organizations to identify training opportunities specific to anti-Islamophobia, intersectionality, bystander intervention, and allyship, and disseminate to the broader community.

5.3 Programs and Services

- a. Develop models and programs for training Muslim youth leaders, such as a Youth Fellowship program, to engage them in civic and public life as per **NCCM Recommendation #61**.
- b. Continue to examine ways to better serve the needs of Londoners who are not English speaking.
- c. Continue to explore ways to make community centres, programs, services, and public spaces more inclusive and welcoming for members of diverse Muslim communities, especially women, including using spaces to raise awareness and to educate.

5.4 Accountability and Implementation

- a. The Mayor of the City of London to build an Anti-Islamophobia Advisory Council/Circle, with appropriate representation of diverse Muslims in London as per **NCCM Recommendation #57**. This body should meet quarterly and have the responsibility to provide oversight for the implementation of the recommendations directed to the City of London.
- b. Establish a Muslim Community Liaison Advisor role within the Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Division with the responsibility of working with community partners to implement the recommendations directed to the City of London.
- c. Continue the work of the Anti-Islamophobia Working Group and share best practices and progress. This forum will provide a space for community based and public sector organizations to hold each other and the City accountable for commitments they have made towards disrupting Islamophobia.
- d. The Community Diversity & Inclusion Strategy (CDIS) to consider whether Islamophobia should form a distinct priority within the Strategy.
- e. Create an implementation plan by Fall 2022 for City of London actions to end Islamophobia with activities, responsibilities, timelines, measures, budget, and any necessary funding requests.

Recommendations for Community Based and Public Sector Organizations

The following recommendations refer to actions that local community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London, can take towards furthering efforts to dismantle Islamophobia within their spheres of influence and accountability.

5.5 Advocacy

- a. Community based and public sector organizations should leverage their advocacy efforts with all levels of government against initiatives, legislation, or other practices that are rooted in Islamophobia.

5.6 Education and Awareness

- a. Community based and public sector organizations to explore ways to support and promote local anti-Islamophobia initiatives in response to **NCCM Recommendation #56** and collaborate with local community-based social support organizations such as the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI) and the London Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP) that have been doing this work, and continue to do so, within the community and are able to provide guidance and resources for new initiatives.
- b. Community based and public sector organizations to support and promote anti-Islamophobia public awareness campaigns which emerge in response to **NCCM Recommendation #58**.

5.7 Programs and Services

- a. Community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London, to promote equitable, inclusive, and welcoming spaces for diverse Muslim

- communities, especially women, including using spaces to raise awareness and to educate.
- b. Community based and public sector organizations that provide funding, including the City of London, to begin or continue to review their funding procedures to make them more accessible to Muslim organizations. They should also consider enhancing their support specifically to organizations providing mental health resources and supports to Muslim communities.
 - c. The City of London to work with relevant community partners to explore the creation of an online reporting tool for hate-related or harassment incidents.
 - d. Health sector partners to:
 - i. Expand their equity initiatives to improve health equity outcomes for Muslims in London.
 - ii. Explore expanding collaborative care with other community based and public sector organizations.
 - e. Local school boards to:
 - i. Endorse the 61 NCCM recommendations and send letters of support to appropriate levels of government.
 - ii. Work with the Ministry of Education to develop an anti-Islamophobia strategy as per **NCCM Recommendation #43**.
 - iii. Call on the Province of Ontario to introduce and pass the *Our London Family Act*, particularly the recommendations on education reform at the provincial level.
 - iv. Endorse the submissions for the National Summit on Islamophobia of the Hikma Public Affairs Council, particularly the recommendations on education reform at the school board level.
 - v. Operationalize any and all recommendations of the NCCM, the *Our London Family Act* and Hikma Public Affairs Council relevant to local school boards.
 - vi. Review teaching and learning materials to ensure inclusion and integration of the diverse and intersectional experiences of Muslims.
 - vii. Consider the creation of a Board-level anti-Islamophobia resource person to support teachers and administrators in providing strong anti-Islamophobia messaging in education, to support Muslim children and teachers, and to address bullying and harassment.
 - viii. Conduct an audit on the adequacy of religious accommodations for Muslim students and staff.
 - ix. Establish a community of practice across local school boards dedicated to sharing best practices in anti-racism and anti-oppression work including addressing Islamophobia.
 - x. The Youth Coalition Combating Islamophobia (YCCI) is looking to collaborate with local school boards and create an educational video as an anti-Islamophobia initiative. Local school boards should consider supporting these efforts.
 - f. London Police Service to:
 - i. Review its approach to responding to hate-based incidents with an intersectional and trauma informed lens.
 - ii. Continue its efforts in relationship building and community involvement with local Muslim communities based and public sector organizations.

- iii. Request that any future anti-racism and anti-oppression training include a specific component addressing unconscious and explicit bias against Muslims.
- iv. Continue and expand its in-service mentoring through the Diversity Officer within the Community Mobilization and Support Unit.
- g. London Public Library to:
 - i. Begin the implementation of their Strategic Plan based on the feedback received from their Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Organizational Assessment.
 - ii. Continue to work with community members and other organizations to build more inclusive collections in multiple languages.
- h. Museum London to:
 - i. Continue to develop inclusive programming such as their planned exhibition themed on resilience within communities.
 - ii. Explore developing museum exhibits in partnership with the community.
- i. Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration (MRCSSI) to:
 - i. Provide guidance to other community based and public sector organizations on the challenges faced by the diverse Muslim communities in London.
 - ii. Train service providers as well as workers in the public sector on the root causes and impacts of Islamophobia, and the trauma-informed approaches that can be implemented to disrupt it.
 - iii. Serve as a resource for developing culturally integrative solutions to address bias and discrimination in general, working alongside other communities experiencing it, and addressing Islamophobia, particularly through the offering of public and sector specific training and workshops.
- j. Post-Secondary Institutions to:
 - i. Explore partnerships to support and fund the collection of academic and empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative, on the impact and experiences of being Muslim in London.
 - ii. Continue to build and strengthen relationships with Muslim students and staff.
 - iii. Fanshawe College to continue to work with community members in the creation of the OurLondonFamily website.
 - iv. Western University does not currently have an Interdisciplinary program/Chair on Islam, Muslims, Islamic Civilizations or Critical Muslim Studies. The university should continue its efforts to source funding to address this need and gap.

5.8 Internal Policies and Practices

- a. Community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London and their Agencies, Boards, and Commissions, to begin or continue a review of their policies, programs, services, and practices using an equity tool and a trauma-informed approach that identifies barriers to participation for Muslims, and especially for Muslim women.
- b. Community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London and their Agencies, Boards, and Commissions, to begin or continue a review of their recruitment, hiring, retention, and human resources practices using an equity tool and a trauma-informed approach that identifies barriers to participation for Muslims, and especially for Muslim women.

- c. Community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London and their Agencies, Boards, and Commissions, to review their current and future training and development opportunities using an equity tool and a trauma-informed approach that identifies any unconscious or explicit bias against Muslims, and especially against Muslim women.
- d. Community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London and their Agencies, Boards, and Commissions, to ensure that their current and future training and development opportunities include a specific component addressing unconscious and explicit bias against Muslims, and especially against Muslim women.
- e. Community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London and their Agencies, Boards, and Commissions, to begin or continue to collect demographic data of its staff and assess how closely they reflect the community and where they are positioned within their organization.
- f. Community based and public sector organizations, including the City of London and their Agencies, Boards, and Commissions, to review, and where necessary, enhance and/or create physical spaces dedicated to prayer and reflection, including appropriate signage and communication to staff.

6.0 Conclusion

The sentiments of Muslim communities are clear: there is pain, frustration, fear, and anger at the acts of Islamophobia and systemic exclusion that they face on a daily basis. Muslim women, in particular, are affected disproportionately by gendered Islamophobia, that significantly impacts their safety and ability to participate in civic life. While the terror attack on June 6, 2021, was the most violent and egregious instance of Islamophobia that London has experienced, it occurred within a larger landscape and system, one that needs to be actively disrupted. Community based and public sector organizations recognize that they have a role to play in disrupting Islamophobia. All parties look to the City of London for their leadership and advocacy, guided by insight from Muslim communities. In the aftermath of the terror attack, the City of London made several commitments. This action plan builds on those commitments and provides recommendations for the City as well as for community based and public sector organizations. By intentionally and collectively committing to actions to disrupt Islamophobia, individuals, organizations, and the City of London can significantly and positively impact the lives and experiences of Muslim communities.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix A.1: [NCCM Recommendations, National Summit on Islamophobia, July 19, 2021](#)

Appendix A.2: [Our London Family Act](#)

Appendix A.3: [Submission for the National Islamophobia Summit, Hikma Public Affairs Council](#)