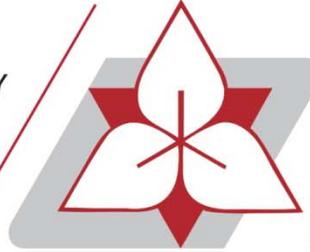


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**ONTARIO  
FEDERATION OF  
LABOUR**

## **Submission on the Anti-Racism Directorate**

**October 2016**

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) is pleased to make a submission to the Anti-Racism Directorate on how to effectively address systemic racism across Ontario. Although we formally represent one million workers across Ontario, we advocate on behalf of all working people in the province.

It is widely recognized that racialized<sup>1</sup> workers encounter labour market discrimination. This is reflected across a number of different indicators, including the ability to secure and maintain employment (e.g., unemployment rate) as well as career trajectories (e.g., lifetime earnings). As a result, racialized workers are overrepresented in precarious jobs (i.e., employment that is insecure, temporary, low paying, and with little chance for advancement).<sup>i</sup>

All Ontarians have a responsibility to honour those that fought for racial justice and for an end to racial inequality by continuing their legacy. Government also shares in this responsibility: it must lead by example and take meaningful steps to advance this fight. Together, we must make a commitment to end systemic racism and dismantle the barriers preventing the full and equal participation of all racialized workers in Ontario's labour market.

The OFL has long advocated for the establishment of an Anti-Racism Directorate in Ontario and with its launch, we are eager to see the government take action on our recommendations:

### **Short-Term Government Initiatives**

- Launch specific public education and awareness campaigns around Anti-Indigenous, Anti- Black racism, and Anti-Semitism as well as Islamophobia and xenophobia.
- Ensure that the Directorate's staff reflect Ontario's diverse communities.
- Establish an Anti-Racism Advisory Council comprised of community and labour representatives to advise and consult on the development of the Anti-Racism Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> The term racialized is used to acknowledge "race" as a social construct and a way of describing a group of people. Racialization is the process through which groups are designated as different and on that basis subjected to differential and unequal treatment. In the present context, racialized groups include those who may experience differential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, economics, and religion (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2008).

## Long-Term Government Initiatives

- Create an Anti-Racism Strategy using the following measures:
  - Consult with racialized communities as well as labour and community groups;
  - Establish specific and measurable objectives and targets as well as accountability measures; and
  - Recognize the differential impact of racism as experienced by different racialized communities—with specific goals and consultation plans for Indigenous, Black, Jewish, and Muslim communities.
- Establish an appropriate annual budget to ensure that the Directorate has the required resources. It is important to note that other directorates and secretariats (e.g., women, accessibility, seniors) in Ontario have significantly higher funding than the \$5 million currently proposed for the Anti-Racism Directorate. All ministries should also have funding allocated to anti-racism initiatives.
- Focus the Strategy on creating opportunities for racialized workers to thrive through the following government actions:

### Increase Access to Unionization

Every worker should have a pathway to organize and to collectively bargain in pursuit of exercising real influence over the creation of workplace rules. Given that racialized workers have a 30 per cent lower unionization rate than non-racialized workers<sup>ii</sup>, there needs to be a broader collective bargaining mechanism that allows these individuals to provide greater input in and influence over the issues that affect them at work.

For millions of workers across the province, belonging to a union has proven to be an effective way to have meaningful representation at work. Unionization provides resources and supports to help workers strengthen and enforce their rights under the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act*. It also leads to improved wages, better working conditions, and the availability of benefits beyond minimum standards.<sup>iii</sup>

*Please refer to the attached October 2016 OFL submission on the Changing Workplaces Review for specific recommendations on expanding access to unionization.*

### Raise Employment Standards

As discussed, the work that racialized workers are able to attain is much more likely to be insecure, temporary, and low paying. In fact, racialized people are overrepresented in a range of traditionally low-paid business services (e.g., call centres, security services, and janitorial services).<sup>iv</sup> These low-paying jobs are often characterized by fewer guarantees of paid leave, an unpredictable work schedule, and with less likelihood of union membership. The Ontario government should use the opportunity of the Changing Workplaces Review to apply an equity lens on employment and labour conditions in Ontario. Changes must be made to both the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act* that will help create a framework for decent work for all Ontarians.

### *Invest in Social Programs*

Racial inequalities persist across various dimensions, including education and learning; health and well-being; employment; income levels and social assistance; justice and policing; immigration and newcomer settlement; housing and homelessness; and food (in)security. For example, poverty rates for racialized families are three times higher than for non-racialized families.<sup>v</sup>

Before the government makes any funding commitments, however, it should require all ministries to conduct race-based analysis on the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of all government policies and programs (e.g., through the Changing Workplaces Review) as well as perform race-responsive budgeting to account for racial effects of public spending and revenues and to redress racial inequalities through the allocation of public investments and resources.

### *Increase the Minimum Wage*

Racialized workers are overrepresented in minimum wage jobs in Ontario—many of which are unstable with little or no security and without workplace benefits. In 2011, the share of racialized employees earning the minimum wage was nearly 50 per cent higher compared to the total working population in Ontario. Moreover, racialized women are disproportionately represented in minimum-wage jobs.<sup>vi</sup> The OFL continues to advocate for a \$15 an hour minimum wage. No one should work full-time and still live in poverty. Under the ESA, all Ontarians—with no exemptions—should earn at least \$15 per hour, with that amount adjusted for inflation annually.

The OFL also endorses all of the recommendations put forth by the Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change. Their framework for action provides a comprehensive approach that has the potential to challenge individual, systemic, and cultural racism in all its forms. Please refer to the Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change's attached draft legislation—*An Act respecting Anti-Racism in Ontario*—which outlines how to effectively implement the recommendations below.

- The Government must develop a public Anti-Racism Strategy to guide the work of the Directorate.
- The Anti-Racism Strategy must contain specific, objective, and measurable targets aimed at addressing systemic racism in the province.
- The Government must consult with racialized communities and community groups on the development, review, and revision of the Anti-Racism Strategy.
- The Anti-Racism Strategy must recognize the differential impact of racism as experienced by different racialized communities—with specific goals and consultation plans.
- The Government must review and revise the Anti-Racism Strategy at least once every five years.
- The Government must pass legislation to support the work of the Directorate.
- The Directorate must issue policies and directives to all agencies in corporate and public sectors on how to address systemic racism and require all of them to set targets with measurable goals and specific timetables.
- The Directorate must make it mandatory for all agencies in corporate and public sectors to collect ethno-racially disaggregated data and to conduct regular audits to report on whether their targets are being met.
- Funding to all agencies in corporate and public sectors should be tied to meeting the targets and reporting requirements as set out by the Directorate—where appropriate.
- The Minister must report annually to the legislature on the progress of the Strategy.

## END NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Andrea Noack and Leah Vosko, 2011. Precarious Jobs in Ontario: Mapping Dimensions of Labour Market Insecurity by Workers' Social Location and Context.

<sup>ii</sup> Sheila Block. 2015. A Higher Standard: The Case for Holding Low-Wage Employers in Ontario to a Higher Standard.

[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario%20Office/2015/06/Higher\\_Standard.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Ontario%20Office/2015/06/Higher_Standard.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Sheila Block and Grace-Edward Galabuzi. 2011. Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market: The gap for racialized workers.

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2011/03/Colour%20Coded%20Labour%20Market.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Sheila Block. 2013. Who Is Working For Minimum Wage In Ontario?

<http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Who-Makes-Minimum-Wage.pdf>