

**For Immediate Release**

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**Racialized Communities Call on Governments in Canada to End Racism and Poverty on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**

October 17 is recognized by the United Nations as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. **Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change (COP-COC)** calls on all levels of Government in Canada to mark this day by committing to meaningfully address the interrelated issues of racism and poverty in Canada.

The theme for this year as identified by the UN is to address the challenge of achieving social and environmental justice for all. In naming this theme, the UN observes that persons living in poverty experience many interrelated and mutually reinforcing deprivations that prevent them from realizing their rights and perpetuate their poverty including: dangerous work conditions, unsafe housing, lack of nutritious food, unequal access to justice, lack of political power and limited access to health care.

“All of these drivers of poverty named by the UN are also prevalent in Canada, and especially so for Indigenous communities and communities of colour,” said Avvy Go, Clinic Director of the Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic and Steering Committee member of COP-COC. “Most troublingly, COVID-19 has exacerbated these fundamental problems and widened economic inequities between racialized and non-racialized groups all across the country,” added Go.

“Black, other racialized and Indigenous peoples and especially women from these groups as well as migrant workers and precarious migrants, face the highest risk of exposure to COVID-19. That is almost entirely because of poverty and systemic racism. Racialized poverty is real. Poverty reduction plans must be targeted so that all of our communities are included in measures that benefit all other Canadian residents,” said Debbie Douglas, Executive Director of OCASI – Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants.

In September, COP-COC released a Reconstruction and Reset Plan calling for policy and legislative initiatives that will reduce and/or eliminate systemic racism in employment, health, housing, immigration, justice, and poverty, among others. The recent Throne Speech did respond to some, but not all, of the policy asks by COP-COC.

“While we were pleased to see the Prime Minister acknowledging systemic racism in the Throne Speech and committing his government to reconciliation and to fight discrimination of every kind, we are still waiting for more concrete measures that will put us on a clear path to equality and justice,” said Shalini Konanur, Executive Director of the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario.

“ La Pandémie du Covid19 est venue exacerber les inégaux et injustices criantes auxquelles font face les communautés racisées et autochtones au Canada. Des mesures concrètes au-delà des promesses doivent être mises en actions immédiatement” a indiqué pour sa part Mohamed Boudjenane au nom de la Fédération Canado-Arabe et du Comité Canado-Arabe Anti-Discrimination.

To build a sustainable and resilient economy that meaningfully addresses these inequitable experiences of poverty and advances social and environmental justice, COP-COC is calling for strong Employment Equity measures by all levels of government by effectively engaging the existing tool of the federal Employment Equity Act, and creating parallel provincial-territorial municipal frameworks. This will ensure fair-equitable access to all future work - including that related to all current physical and social infrastructure investments and financial transfers.

COP-COC urges all levels of government in Canada to work together to develop substantive policy initiatives to address the twin issues of poverty and racism, so as to build a “stronger and more resilient Canada” *for all*.

Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change is a community initiative based in Ontario and is made up of individuals and organizations working to build community-based capacity to address the growing racialization of poverty and the resulting increased levels of social exclusion and marginalization of racialized communities (both Indigenous Peoples and peoples of colour).

For COP-COC’s backgrounder on employment equity:

English - [https://colourofpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EN\\_Employment-Equity-1-Pager.pdf](https://colourofpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EN_Employment-Equity-1-Pager.pdf)

Français - [https://colourofpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FR\\_Employment-Equity-1-Pager.pdf](https://colourofpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FR_Employment-Equity-1-Pager.pdf)

For information about COP-COC’s Reconstruction and Reset Plan for Canada:

English - <https://colourofpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COP-COC-COVID-Reconstruction-Plan-Federal-FINAL.pdf>

Français - <https://colourofpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COP-COC-COVID-Reconstruction-Plan-Federal-FINAL.FR-Sep-2020-1.pdf>

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