

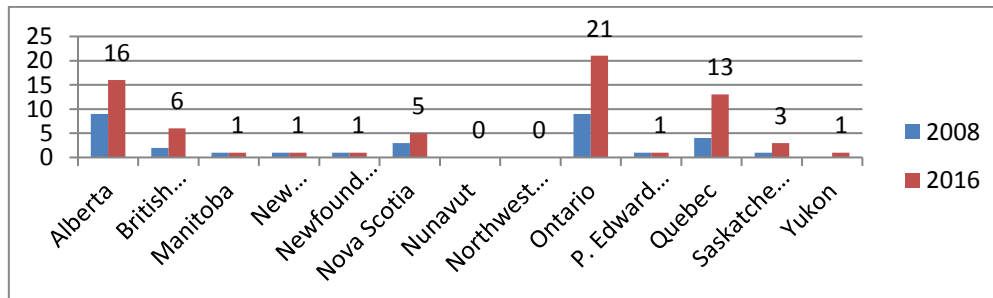


The Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination

Cities play an increasingly key role in addressing social issues, particularly those associated with equity and inclusion in a context of growing urbanization and rapid demographic changes. Currently, more than half of the world’s population lives in urban areas.¹ In Canada, this figure rises to 81%,² with slightly more than one third of the population living in the three largest metropolitan areas (Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver).³ In 2011, 6.8 million immigrants lived in Canada, 91% of whom dwelt in one of the country’s 33 metropolitan areas, as opposed to 63.3% of native-born Canadians.⁴ That same year, more than half of Canada’s Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), representing 4.3% of Canada’s population,⁵ lived in cities. According to Statistics Canada, up to 14.4 million people (approximately one third of the country’s population) will belong to a visible minority by 2031.⁶

This has been the operating context for the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD) launched in 2005 by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO). Thanks to support from partners like the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies and the Canadian Foundation for Race Relations, there are now 69 signatory municipalities in CCMARD, which also receives support from other local, provincial and national partners.

Distribution of CCMARD Signatory Municipalities, 2008 & 2016



*Revised in September 2016

I. CCMARD: Lines of Action

Inclusion and diversity, as well as efforts to combat racism and discrimination, are priorities for municipalities that welcome a growing number of immigrants and Indigenous Peoples. This reality strains available resources and calls for innovative, engaging and effective strategies.

CCMARD offers a structured yet flexible framework for helping municipalities develop such strategies. This framework consists of Ten Common Commitments that are crucial for achieving the inclusion and equity mandated by CCMARD. The Ten Common Commitments define necessary areas of action, notably employment, education, housing, policing, cultural activities and civic engagement.

¹ World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/topic/urban-development?display=graph> (accessed September 15, 2016)

² Statistics Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo62a-eng.htm> (accessed September 15, 2016)

³ Statistics Canada, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm> (accessed September 15, 2016)

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Statistics Canada. Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population, 2006 to 2031, March 2010.

The Ten Common Commitments relate to three primary areas of municipal responsibility

I - The municipality as a guardian of public interest

1. Providing increased vigilance against systemic and individual racism and discrimination
2. Monitoring racism and discrimination in the community broadly and taking action to address them
3. Informing and supporting people who experience racism and discrimination
4. Supporting police efforts to combat racism and discrimination

II- The municipality as an organization in the fulfillment of human rights

5. Providing equal opportunities as a municipal employer, service provider and contractor
6. Supporting measures to promote equity in the labour market
7. Supporting measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promote diversity and equal opportunity in housing

III. The municipality as a community that shares responsibility for respecting and promoting human rights and diversity

8. Involving citizens by giving them a voice in anti-racism initiatives and decision-making
9. Supporting measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promoting diversity and equal opportunity in the education sector and in other forms of learning
10. Promoting respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, and including Aboriginal and racialized communities into the cultural fabric of the municipality

In order to join CCMARD, municipalities must adopt a motion and sign the Declaration of Commitment. They must also work with local partners to develop an action plan based on the Ten Common Commitments. It is this action plan that guides the implementation of commitments. In many cases, action plans take the form of a policy or statement on diversity that enables both the general population and local partners to understand the directions in which their municipalities want to go in order to improve the quality of life of marginalized individuals and groups. CCMARD municipalities are encouraged to adopt a participatory and collaborative approach that encourages dialogue among communities in order to succeed with their action plan and related policies and programs.

It is important to emphasize that each municipality can implement the Ten Common Commitments in its own way. This flexible approach allows a municipality to adapt its action plan to its own realities, challenges and priorities, while also integrating the plan into existing policies and programs. CCMARD does not ask municipalities and their partners to reinvent the wheel but rather to reflect on the challenges their communities face and to identify ways to address these challenges. Municipalities are also encouraged to question the relevance of existing initiatives and programs, identify gaps, and select the areas of action they wish to prioritize.

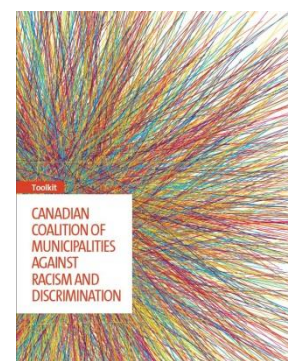
For most CCMARD municipalities, membership has helped in preparing and executing projects designed to create more inclusive communities. For example, some municipalities have responded to diversity by creating an advisory committee or developing a policy combined with a strategic framework and/or implementation plan. Others have created a job position to coordinate these activities, promote partnerships with local police forces or set up awareness, education, employment or housing programs. On the other hand, some municipalities prefer to focus on particular groups such as Indigenous Peoples, newcomers or seasonal workers.

No matter what approach is adopted, the desired main outcome is that CCMARD membership leads to political changes and commitments. The engagement of signatory municipalities leads to systemic change and the creation of sustainable and more inclusive communities for everyone in the medium and long terms.

II. CCMARD: Achievements

CCMARD's purpose is helping municipalities address major social, economic and cultural challenges by facilitating the sharing of innovative approaches developed by other signatory municipalities of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities—ICCAR and their partners in Canada and elsewhere.

Since its launch in 2005, CCMARD has attracted 69 signatory municipalities in 10 provinces and one territory, including major urban centres like Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Montréal. Over the course of two national meetings and more than 10 regional or provincial meetings, members shared experiences and best practices, which were compiled in a toolkit



in 2012.⁷ In addition, a special issue of *Canadian Diversity*, published by the Association of Canadian Studies to mark CCMARD's 10th anniversary, explored issues such as human rights in Canada, institutional racism, gender equity, the role of youth in efforts to combat racism and discrimination, and the situation of Indigenous Peoples living in urban areas.

Membership in the CCMARD network allows municipalities to develop inclusion and diversity policies that help them address some of the major challenges they are facing. Here are a few examples of steps taken by some signatory municipalities to create more inclusive and sustainable communities:

- *For the City of Lethbridge (Alberta), joining CCMARD has led to major results: A Framework for Action was developed in consultation with community partners and approved by City Council; an Inclusion Consultant was hired by the City; the City's CCMARD conference series led to concrete outcomes such as the "Tools for Action" Moving beyond Discussion. CCMARD became a broad community focused committee that oversees and gives direction to a wide range of activities and initiatives designed to make Lethbridge a more "Welcoming and Inclusive" community.*
- *The first step taken by the City of New Glasgow (Nova Scotia) after joining CCMARD in 2010 was to set up a committee for race relations and anti-discrimination that was charged with developing an action plan for the municipality. This plan was launched in 2013 following extensive consultations that enabled the municipality to identify not only local best practices but also shortcomings on the inclusion and diversity front. The municipality's cultural diversity efforts were bolstered by the accountability and sustainability that emerged from the process.*
- *In 2009, the City of Stratford (Prince Edward Island) addressed the challenge of rapid demographic growth and the arrival of many immigrants by adopting a plan for diversity and inclusion (based on the Ten Common Commitments), which was designed to give every resident the wherewithal to achieve their full potential and contribute to the community's sustainable development. Municipal councillors and staff became more sensitized to issues of diversity and inclusion, which facilitated programming and decision-making processes. Stratford's efforts have been recognized by the Newcomers Association of P.E.I. and the Chamber of Commerce.*
- *In 2014, the CCMARD advisory committee for the City of Whitehorse (Yukon) proposed a motion requesting the municipal council to support a national inquiry into missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls as well as the efforts to develop a national action plan to combat the root causes of this crisis. This motion passed unanimously.*
- *CCMARD played a key role in the development of the City of Brooks' (Alberta) partnership plan for welcoming and inclusive cities (2012 – 2014). This plan led not only to a partnership with the local RCMP office and their increased involvement on various committees and at local events, but also to the creation of an Inclusion Coordinator position to monitor, update and implement the action plan's objectives. The municipal council even allocated a budget to organize events and other initiatives designed to foster a welcoming and inclusive community. Brooks also partnered with the business community and in 2012 instituted an award to recognize companies that promote employment equity.*

III. CCMARD: The Challenges

Apart from changing demographics and the impact of such change on Canada's ethnocultural mosaic, the country's municipalities face several other significant challenges.

The first challenge is municipalities' limited human and financial resources. This shortfall sometimes pits inclusion and diversity objectives against one another, not to mention against other major issues (e.g. economic or environmental challenges) that are better known or have more visible impacts. In fact, resulting shifts in policies and political direction can also engender programming uncertainty. In other words, changes that directly impact the allocation of a municipality's resources can complicate the process of monitoring its CCMARD commitments. To address these challenges, it is important to invest time and energy in developing and strengthening partnerships at all three levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal) as well as with various civil society groups. For example, in the struggle to combat poverty and exclusion, municipalities can collaborate with local employers in order to eliminate employment barriers by challenging stereotypes and providing appropriate training. Partnerships are essential in the case of initiatives that use a holistic approach like CCMARD's because they pool expertise and share efforts and responsibilities. Partnerships are also opportunities to build on each partner's

⁷ *Toolkit: Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination* (2012) describes numerous examples of how municipalities implemented the Ten Common Commitments. These examples are designed to help municipalities prepare for membership in CCMARD and meet their commitments. The toolkit can be downloaded at www.unesco.ca

programs and past experience, thereby obviating potential duplication in the use of the limited financial and human resources of the partners involved.

In response to the emergence of challenges like religious rights, mental health issues or multiple cultural identities, municipalities adapt programs and policies to address the rights and needs of the groups concerned. However, these changes sometimes occur in haste without collecting the data needed to direct them (largely due to a lack of time or resources). The development of partnerships with research or research-action groups, both of which are encouraged by CCMARD, seems to be an effective way of providing municipalities and their partners with simplified access to research data and findings that can inform their decisions and help them maximize the results of their initiatives.

At the same time, the Internet and social media are changing the landscape within which urban dwellers, especially young people, develop socially. These new communication tools offer many possibilities to municipalities, especially in terms of service delivery. However, they can also open pathways to discrimination, radicalization, hate crimes and other social problems for municipalities. Here again, it is important to develop partnerships with organizations and researchers actively working on these issues in order to identify strategies and train the service providers (police, teachers, social workers, etc.) so as to nip such problems in the bud. CCMARD's Ten Common Commitments offer municipalities a basic framework for developing plans to combat the inequalities currently endured by certain groups and to mitigate their negative effects.

Racism and discrimination do not just manifest themselves in personal interactions. They also manifest systemically in policies and programs that can create, worsen or ignore exclusion. Racism and discrimination are difficult to address at this systemic level. The changes required to address systemic issues, and to see concrete and measurable results, require efforts over both the short and long terms. Prejudices against certain groups are often rooted deeply in cultures and require work at many levels over many years to address. When it comes to measuring the impacts and results of these initiatives and thereby justifying the resources allotted to them, city actors must consider the complexity of such issues and acknowledge that change takes time – a lot of time.

IV. CCMARD: Lessons Learned

There are many lessons to be drawn from the Canadian experience in the context of CCMARD when it comes to combatting racism and discrimination.

First, city actors must be familiar with their own local issues, challenges, programs, human and financial resources, and other realities when planning an initiative to foster inclusion, so their framework of activities conforms to their needs.

In the CCMARD context, the fact that signatory municipalities can develop action plans on the basis of their own experience and local reality adds value to projects and drives more municipalities and partners to the network. CCMARD enjoys a collaborative process that pools viewpoints from a broad range of actors who care about building an inclusive Canada, free of racism and discrimination. In developing partnerships, it is important to recognize the needs and mandates of those partners as well as the people for whom an initiative is created to serve. This requires consulting interested actors at the very outset of a project and at the implementation stage, as well as keeping them involved throughout the evaluation process. It also means respecting their unique responsibilities.

Developing an action plan gives municipalities an opportunity to initiate a dialogue among councillors, residents, municipal employees, community groups and local organizations. Such a dialogue can identify priority sectors requiring immediate action and galvanize the community to allow for a greater sense of ownership of the issues under discussion. The resulting action plans can then be used to foster accountability and to guide the development and carrying out of initiatives. It is then possible to use the initial action plan as a basis for future planning and action as things unfold.

It is also important to acknowledge the value of each partner's expertise and experience in order to take advantage of their respective strengths. Among CCMARD municipalities, we have witnessed the emergence of diversity champions whose dedication and commitment have advanced efforts to combat racism and discrimination by helping identify social issues or encourage civic engagement.

Lastly, it is also imperative that the commitment timeframe be clearly understood by all concerned parties so that inclusion initiatives can be sustained. The struggle to combat racism and discrimination implies both social and systemic changes that require time and effort. As the saying goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day." All parties must

therefore recognize that long-term commitment is needed to achieve common objectives of inclusion and equality.

The future of CCMARD is promising. Thanks to imaginative planning, ongoing collaboration and more effective sharing of information about best practices and lessons learned, its signatory municipalities can not only help bring about systemic changes but also serve as inspiring models of inclusive institutions. Together, signatory municipalities can make Canada an inclusive and equitable country today and for future generations.

Conclusion

No one likes to discuss racism or discrimination, because they reflect aspects of Canadian history and society that we prefer to ignore. Addressing these realities is a challenge we need to face together because even one person enduring racism and/or discrimination is already one person too many. Concrete steps are needed to root out the problem. Over the past 11 years, CCMARD has offered interested municipalities ways of becoming actively engaged – publicly and politically – to help create inclusive communities.

By providing a platform for mutual learning, sharing best practices, open dialogue and creative problem-solving, CCMARD pools and draws on expertise, knowledge, resources and lessons learned. Given the social and systemic changes required, efforts to combat racism and discrimination demand the ongoing long-term commitment of many partners. One thing CCMARD has clearly demonstrated is that eliminating racism and discrimination is everyone's business.