



Community Voice Matters: An Open Letter Regarding the Elimination of Edmonton's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee

Dear Mayor Andrew Knack and Members of Edmonton City Council,

We are writing on behalf of StopHateAB to express our disappointment regarding the recent decision to sunset the City of Edmonton's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee.

While we recognize that the committee has been paused for several years, the decision to permanently eliminate it without presenting a clear replacement mechanism for community consultation and accountability raises significant concerns, particularly at a time when communities across Edmonton and Alberta continue to experience rising levels of hate, discrimination, and polarization.

As an organization serving communities across Alberta, we have seen firsthand the growing concerns being expressed by residents regarding hate, polarization, and community safety. Through our reporting platform, community outreach initiatives, victim support resources, and research projects, we regularly hear from individuals who are directly impacted by hate crimes and hate incidents and who are looking to institutions for leadership, accountability, and meaningful engagement.

We want to acknowledge that the City of Edmonton has taken important steps over the years to address racism and discrimination through its Anti-Racism Strategy and continued support for anti-racism initiatives and community grants. These efforts matter, and many organizations, including ours, have benefited from opportunities to collaborate with the City in meaningful ways.

However, funding anti-racism initiatives and maintaining a strategy are not substitutes for maintaining formal structures that allow communities to directly inform, shape, and hold institutions accountable in their anti-racism work.

Advisory committees are not symbolic bodies. At their best, they serve as important bridges between institutions and communities. They provide lived experience informed feedback, identify emerging issues, strengthen public trust, and ensure that policy conversations remain connected to the realities communities are facing on the ground.

The removal of the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee represents more than a governance change. It represents the loss of one of the City's few formal mechanisms through which



racialized and marginalized communities could directly inform and influence anti-racism efforts. While the committee may not have been perfect, it provided a formal avenue for lived experiences, community concerns, and emerging issues to be brought directly into municipal conversations. Its elimination leaves a gap that has yet to be addressed. At a time when many communities are feeling increasingly vulnerable and unheard, preserving meaningful opportunities for engagement, accountability, and dialogue is more important than ever.

Across Canada, police-reported hate crimes have continued to rise significantly over the last several years. Statistics Canada reported that police-reported hate crimes increased by 145% between 2019 and 2023.¹ In 2023 alone, hate crimes targeting Jewish communities increased by 71%, hate crimes targeting Muslim communities increased by 94%, and hate crimes targeting South Asian communities increased by 35% compared to the previous year.¹ Hate crimes targeting South Asian communities have now increased four consecutive years and rose by 227% between 2019 and 2023.¹

Statistics Canada has also reported that hate crimes targeting South Asian communities increased by 143% between 2019 and 2022, while hate crimes targeting Indigenous peoples remained significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels.²

At the same time, organizations working directly with impacted communities continue to observe increasing fear, polarization, and community tensions connected to misinformation, online radicalization, and global events spilling into local communities.

Here in Alberta, organizations like StopHateAB continue to hear directly from individuals and families impacted by hate incidents, harassment, discrimination, and targeted violence. Through our reporting platform, community outreach, educational initiatives, and recent research projects, we have documented growing concerns regarding Islamophobia, antisemitism, anti-South Asian racism, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and hate connected to geopolitical tensions impacting Arab, Palestinian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and other communities.

What we continue to hear is clear: many people do not feel safer, more heard, or more supported. In fact, many communities feel the opposite.

This is why the timing of this decision is deeply concerning.



Earlier this year, StopHateAB released a province-wide study examining the mental health effects of hate against racialized individuals and communities in Alberta.³ The study

included 148 survey responses, 63 focus group participants, and 29 in-depth interviews with racialized Albertans who had experienced hate.³ Nearly 60% of survey respondents reported experiencing multiple hate-motivated incidents, yet only 10% reported those incidents to law enforcement.³

Participants described experiencing fear, anxiety, isolation, mistrust, hypervigilance, avoidance behaviours, and long-term trauma as a result of hate-motivated incidents. Many reported changing their routines, avoiding public spaces, withdrawing from community life, changing jobs, and carrying the impacts of these experiences years after the original incident occurred.³

The study found that hate is not a singular event. Rather, it is an experience that reverberates through individuals, families, and communities, often leaving lasting scars.³

These findings are consistent with what we continue to hear through our outreach, reporting, and community engagement efforts. Across Alberta, individuals are not only experiencing hate; they are experiencing the lasting emotional, psychological, and social consequences that follow.

In addition, our recently released Anti-Hate Outreach Project reports from Grande Prairie, Peace Country, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat identified common themes across vastly different communities.⁴⁻⁷ Participants consistently reported that hate crimes and incidents are underreported, that trust in institutions remains a challenge, that hate is becoming increasingly normalized in public and online spaces, and that many communities feel disconnected from the systems intended to support them.⁴⁻⁷

These findings point to a clear conclusion: now is the time to strengthen opportunities for community voice, engagement, and accountability, not reduce them.

At a time when hate crimes continue to rise and communities report growing mistrust, fear, isolation, and long-term trauma, the elimination of one of Edmonton's few formal anti-racism advisory structures is difficult to reconcile with the City's stated commitment to equity, inclusion, and belonging.

We are disappointed that a decision with significant implications for community engagement and accountability appears to have proceeded without meaningful



consultation with organizations and communities actively working on the frontlines of hate prevention, victim support, anti-racism education, and community safety. Organizations doing this work possess valuable on-the-ground insight into the challenges communities

are facing and could have contributed meaningfully to conversations regarding the future of anti-racism governance within the City of Edmonton.

To date, neither impacted communities nor organizations working directly in the anti-hate space have been provided with a clear explanation of how community input will continue to inform anti-racism efforts following the committee's dissolution. This lack of clarity has left many community members and organizations questioning how their voices will continue to be heard and reflected within Edmonton's anti-racism efforts moving forward.

We recognize that advisory committees are not perfect and that governance structures should evolve over time. However, meaningful evolution requires engagement, transparency, and a clearly communicated path forward. Communities should not be left to speculate about how their voices will continue to influence anti-racism efforts after the removal of a formal advisory mechanism.

The question many communities are now asking is simple: if not this, then what?

If the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee is being eliminated, what mechanism will exist to ensure communities continue to have a formal voice in shaping anti-racism efforts within the City? How will organizations, advocates, researchers, and individuals directly impacted by hate and discrimination continue to provide meaningful feedback and accountability? How will the City ensure its anti-racism work remains informed by lived realities rather than solely institutional perspectives?

These questions deserve clear answers.

For this reason, StopHateAB is formally requesting a meeting with Mayor Andrew Knack, members of City Council, and representatives from organizations actively engaged in anti-hate, anti-racism, and community safety work across Edmonton.

Given the current climate, the documented rise in hate, and the concerns being expressed by impacted communities across Edmonton, we believe this conversation is not simply beneficial, but necessary and overdue.



The elimination of the Anti-Racism Advisory Committee has raised legitimate concerns among community members, service providers, researchers, and advocates regarding the future of anti-racism governance within Edmonton. A meaningful dialogue with those directly engaged in this work would provide an opportunity to discuss these concerns, explore alternatives, and identify pathways to ensure community voices remain embedded within the City's anti-racism efforts moving forward.

Our recommendation is straightforward: before the City permanently closes the door on this chapter, it should engage directly with the communities and organizations most affected by this decision to determine what meaningful and accountable community engagement should look like going forward.

Whether that results in a reimagined advisory body, a new consultation framework, regular community roundtables, or another mechanism entirely, the outcome must ensure that community voices remain part of the conversation.

Anti-racism work cannot solely exist within policy documents or grant streams. It must also exist within relationships, accountability structures, and sustained dialogue with the communities most impacted by hate and discrimination.

Edmonton has long positioned itself as a city that values diversity, inclusion, and belonging. Maintaining meaningful pathways for community voice and engagement is essential to upholding those values, especially during times when many communities are experiencing increased fear, uncertainty, and division.

The communities most affected by hate deserve more than reassurance. They deserve meaningful opportunities to be heard, to help shape solutions, and to participate in decisions that directly affect their lives. We believe Edmonton can and should lead by example in this regard.

We hope this decision marks the beginning of a broader conversation rather than the closing of one.

Sincerely,

StopHateAB



References

¹ Statistics Canada. (2025). Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2023. The Daily, March 25, 2025.

² Statistics Canada. (2024). Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2022. The Daily, March 13, 2024.

³ StopHateAB & Constellation Consulting Group. (2026). Mental Health Effects of Hate Against Racialized Individuals and Communities in Alberta: Report on Findings.

⁴ StopHateAB. (2026). Anti-Hate Outreach Project: The Grande Prairie Report.

⁵ StopHateAB. (2026). Anti-Hate Outreach Project: The Peace Country Report.

⁶ StopHateAB. (2026). Anti-Hate Outreach Project: The Lethbridge Report.

⁷ StopHateAB. (2026). Anti-Hate Outreach Project: The Medicine Hat Report.