

Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives

WHAT WE HEARD

Engaging Communities

When Premier Iain Rankin was sworn in on Feb. 23, he announced the creation of the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives (OEA), led by Minister Tony Ince. The premier identified the environment, economy and equity as top priorities in the Speech from the Throne.

The Office has been tasked to work with partners and communities to lead an approach where government departments work together to:

- address systemic racism and ableism,
- promote diversity and inclusion,
- and achieve anti-racist outcomes that lead to better educational, health, economic and social outcomes for all Nova Scotians.

In all its work, the Office will be ‘working with’ rather than ‘doing to’ communities. Government will not be successful addressing systemic inequities and racism on its own. We need to work with marginalized communities and take action together to make change.

Office Mandate

OEA has been tasked with creating, in collaboration with partners and communities, a whole-of government approach to address systemic racism and ableism, promote diversity and achieve anti-racist outcomes that improve the economic, educational, social and health outcomes of all Nova Scotians.

Following its creation, OEA met with individuals and organizations across the province (internal and external to government) representing many marginalized communities including: African Nova Scotians, Indigenous people, 2SLGTBQIA+, immigrants and newcomers, persons with disabilities, and more.

What We've Heard So Far...

We've heard positive responses to the Office's proposed mandate, and the commitment to address historical and current inequities and racism. People have expressed that it's important for the Office to have the right resources, and to work within government to identify what work the Office should lead, and where departments should lead on work that is planned or underway.

Areas of Agreement

- The Office's focus should be on policy interventions and evaluation.
- It's important to engage with communities throughout the work of the Office—from establishing its mandate, to developing and implementing tools such as equity impact assessments and equity audits.
- Equity should be inclusive of racialized groups as well as people from the 2SLGTBQIA+ community, immigrants and newcomers, people with disabilities, and women.
- Focus on intersectionality and its impact(s) on marginalized communities—people can be affected by more than one factor.
- OEA staff should reflect the communities being served.
- The intention to learn from and build on past and current government initiatives.

Importance of Acknowledging Community Specific Issues

- Maintain space to address specific areas of historic and ongoing inequity, including anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism.
- Be clear on the role of OEA in relation to existing government offices dedicated to equity-seeking and racialized communities, such as African Nova Scotian Affairs, L'Nu Affairs, the Accessibility Directorate and Human Rights Commission. Clearly understand and communicate the differences and how they will work together.



Need to be Flexible:

- Be prepared to address emerging forms of inequity and racism, such as anti-Asian racism and Islamophobia, while still addressing traditional forms of inequity and racism in NS.

Tips for Effective Engagement

- Make sure communication and engagement is accessible... for example, be aware of urban/rural differences and the fact that not everyone is always online.
- Consider ways to enhance community capacity to engage with government.
- Be mindful that Nova Scotia's immigrant and newcomer population is diverse.

Suggestions

- Consider who government is hiring for equity and anti-racism training and what background/ education trainers should require.
- Equity impact assessments used to evaluate policy proposals must be mandatory to be effective and must be accompanied by training.
- If pursuing an advisory council, be careful and intentional about membership and desired functionality.
- Consider how to support municipalities in this work.
- Consider legislation to enshrine commitment to this work.

What's missing

- Housing—racism and inequity in securing and maintaining affordable, accessible housing.
- Health—racism and inequity in health services

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