

Minister of
Diversity, Inclusion and
Persons with Disabilities



Ministre de la
Diversité, de l'inclusion et
Des Personnes en situation de handicap

Ottawa Canada K1A 0J9

Mr. Eric Janse
Interim Clerk of the House of Commons
West Block, Room 233-C
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Janse:

Please find enclosed, in both official languages, the Government of Canada's response to the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled *Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative*, for tabling in the House of Commons pursuant to section 109 of the *Standing Orders of the House of Commons*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Khera'.

The Honourable Kamal Khera, P.C., M.P.

Enclosures: 2

Minister of
Diversity, Inclusion and
Persons with Disabilities



Ministre de la
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Mr. Robert J. Morrissey, M.P.
Chair, Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and
the Status of Persons with Disabilities
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Morrissey:

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Government of Canada to the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) in its report, entitled *Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative*, tabled in the House of Commons on March 29, 2023.

The Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to recommendations made by the Committee. The Government would like to thank both HUMA for this study as well as the witnesses who appeared before the Committee. We acknowledge the Committee's recommendations and notes that they strengthen and complement existing measures that work towards greater social inclusion, improve the wellbeing of People of African descent in Canada and address the unique challenges faced by Black communities in Canada, including discrimination, bias, and anti-Black racism. This includes the Government of Canada's endorsement of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (UN Decade) in 2018. As part of this recognition, Budget 2019 announced \$25 million over five years (2019-2024) to establish the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative (SBCCI) housed at Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to celebrate, share knowledge, and build capacity in Canada's vibrant Black Canadian communities. This investment was built on through subsequent Budgets for a total commitment to date of \$200 million, including a one-year extension of the Initiative.

We welcome the Committee's report as both reassurance that we are focused on the right initiatives and as a resource to inform ongoing government policy, programs, and service delivery decisions to address the long-standing social and economic inequities faced by Black communities in Canada. Through its commitment to the UN Decade, Canada is working with partners across federal departments and civil society to enact change and raise awareness of the UN Decade, which aims to acknowledge the unique challenges faced by People of African Descent globally.

Canada 

We are pleased to provide a response to the Committee's three recommendations that show the Government's leadership in supporting Black communities in Canada.

1. Recommendation 1 – To enhance its efforts to dismantle barriers to equality faced by Black communities, the Government of Canada should work to support Black-led and Black-serving organizations in equality-seeking work, not only through the activities of the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative but as a whole-of-government approach.

The Government is committed to address racism and other forms of discrimination. Black communities in Canada continue to face systemic barriers alongside social, economic and health inequities. Additionally, Black-led organizations, which are often newer or smaller, face barriers in the philanthropic sector, such as struggling to compete for private and public grants. To that end, the Government supports the recommendation to work to support Black-led and Black-serving organizations in equality-seeking work through a whole-of-government approach.

In this regard, and as noted above, the SBCCI housed at ESDC was established in 2019 to celebrate, share knowledge, and build capacity in Canada's vibrant Black Canadian communities. Respecting the guiding principle of "Nothing About Us, Without Us," the SBCCI was co-designed with Black communities through engagement that took place in 2019. The SBCCI aims to advance social inclusion and address the unique challenges faced by Black communities in Canada, including discrimination, biases, and anti-Black racism, through three key pillars of capacity building, systems change, and emerging priorities.

The Government acknowledges the importance of maintaining this momentum to build on the lessons learned and success from the SBCCI and other programs, and the need for coordination at the federal level to better leverage investments aimed to improve the living conditions of Black individuals and Black communities across the country.

More broadly, ESDC has been working collaboratively with federal partners and has developed a whole-of-government approach to advance the objective of the UN Decade, including by establishing interdepartmental collaboration and coordination mechanisms. These governance mechanisms are unique in that they also include members of the Black Executives Network and the Federal Black Employees Caucus. This collaborative work includes developing an action plan to improve the situation of People of African Descent in Canada; strengthening collaboration, strategic alignment, and oversight on programs and initiatives specific to improving the wellbeing of Black individuals and communities in Canada; and implementing plans, priorities and strategies aimed to support Black communities.

The whole-of-government approach to address the unique challenges, including systemic anti-Black racism faced by Black communities, will be complementary to other government initiatives such as the Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund, to support

Black-led charities and social purpose organizations with a sustainable source of funding, the renewal of Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy and the Action Plan on Combatting Hate, through which the Government is taking concrete steps to fight systemic anti-Black racism, hate crimes, and incidents targeting Black and Afro-descendant communities in Canada.

In addition, the Government is also advancing these issues globally, including through participation at the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, and through international agreements such as the North American Partnership for Equity and Racial Justice, which fosters unprecedented collaboration among Canada, the United States, and Mexico to advance the objectives of the Decade. This will provide an opportunity for Canada to continue to work on resolving long-standing and emerging policy questions that are of importance to people of African descent globally, and in Canada.

2. Recommendation – 2 That Employment and Social Development Canada develop clear metrics for evaluating whether the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, including its capacity building stream, is meeting its program objectives and having a positive impact on Black Canadian communities in all regions of the country; and use these results to inform the ways in which it funds and coordinates with Black-led non-profit organizations over the short- and long-term.

The Government supports this recommendation and is currently conducting a midterm evaluation of the SBCCI to assess the last three years (2019-2022) of the initiative, its effectiveness and progress towards meeting its objectives. The key questions that will be addressed are:

- To what extent has the SBCCI's implementation approach (including relevant activities and outputs) ensured that its key outcomes will be achieved?
- To what extent is the SBCCI supporting grassroots community organizations to build capacity in the areas of improved governance, financial management and diversification of funding sources?
- Does the SBCCI National Funders Network need to be modified to ensure that smaller Black-led and Black-serving grassroots organizations are adequately supported by the Network to address their capacity-building needs?
- To what extent is the SBCCI enabling Black Canadian communities to inform and influence public policy development from a Black-led and Black-centric perspective?
- Are any changes and improvements required to the SBCCI's implementation approach to ensure that its key outcomes will be achieved?

The midterm evaluation also includes a review of the intermediary model that is currently used to deliver funding to Black-led and Black-serving community-based organizations. This model decentralizes the decision-making process on SBCCI implementation and brings it closer to communities, respecting the guiding principle of "Nothing About Us, Without Us." The findings of the midterm evaluation will be leveraged to report on the SBCCI and inform the SBCCI implementation and future activities to support Black individuals and communities in Canada. The midterm evaluation will also help adjust reporting and funding practices and improve the delivery of the SBCCI.

All Government of Canada initiatives are required to have a Performance Information Profile, which outlines the theory of change behind the program, and how the impact of the initiative will be measured. The SBCCI's Performance Measurement Framework is being finalized, as part of the current Social Development Partnership Program PIP, including clear metrics that identify to what extent the SBCCI is meeting its program objectives, and is having a positive impact on Black Canadian communities in all regions of the country. The ultimate goal for the SBCCI and the PIP is increased social, economic and cultural inclusion for Black people in Canada. Indicators for immediate, intermediate, and ultimate outcomes are being developed.

3. Recommendation 3 - That the Government of Canada develop and communicate its plans for sustainably supporting Black Canadian communities through Black-led nonprofit organizations, building upon the successes and lessons learned from the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative.

The Government also supports this recommendation, which responds to what we have heard so far from Black communities, including concerns about the late recognition of the UN Decade, the pace of implementation of initiatives, and what will happen once the UN Decade ends. The recommendation also aligns with the work currently underway to explore further options to continue supporting capacity building within Black-led and Black-serving community organizations in the long term as was announced in Budget 2022.

As part of this effort, a series of engagements will be launched in summer 2023 to ensure that these further options are informed by Black communities in keeping with the "Nothing About Us, Without Us" principle. This will also help raise awareness of Black issues and educate the public in general on the unique challenges and systemic barriers face by Black communities. Furthermore, this will support systemwide communication and engagement with Black communities and a shift towards simplified interactions with Black communities to avoid engagement fatigue.

The Government is committed to Black communities in Canada and ensuring their inclusion in all aspects of society. This has been demonstrated by providing leadership

and by making significant investments to supporting Black communities across the country through measures to empower Black communities and address systemic barriers, including anti-Black racism, in all its forms. The Government recognizes that this work is not over, and will use the Committee's report in its work going forward and as a reference point in addressing next steps on the long-standing issues faced by Black communities in Canada. We look forward to continuing to work with the HUMA Committee and Black communities in Canada to advance the social and economic inclusion of Black individuals in Canada and their well-being.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Khera', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Honourable Kamal Khera, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities