

2023

# Anti-Racism Table

ANNUAL REPORT

February 27, 2023

## **Dear Premier King,**

The Table is pleased to share with you its inaugural annual report. Its content reflects the hard work and dedication of its members over the past year. Without the members' expertise, perspectives, passion, and commitment, the Table would be unable to tackle this work in such a robust and sustained way.

## **Highlights and Accomplishments**

With the help of the Executive Council Office (ECO), especially Mr. Dante Bazard, Manager of Anti-Racism Initiatives, the Table had a promising start. Its members established a set of Guiding Principles, Terms of Reference, and internal review process, then began engaging with various government departments, agencies, and partners, such as:

- Public Service Commission
- Engage PEI
- Department of Education and Lifelong Learning
- Department of Justice and Public Safety
- Department of Health and Wellness
- Health PEI
- Medical Society of PEI

Table members provided input on a variety of programs, processes, and initiatives across these groups. Examples include:

- Civil Service Act
- Recruitment and application process of Islanders wishing to serve on Government Agencies, Boards, and Commissions
- Demographic survey of existing members on Government Agencies, Boards and Commissions
- Departmental diversity strategies
- Equity Impact Assessment
- Anti-Racism Impact Assessment
- Race-based and demographic data collection
- Recruitment, retention, hiring, and onboarding practices of medical professionals
- Anti-Racism Action Plan

The Table also selected the recipients of the Province's inaugural Anti-Racism microgrants. The ECO issued \$34,733.20 in funding across 15 organizations, individuals, and youth.

## **Challenges**

The scale of change we are expecting and striving toward is challenging because the necessary capacity, relationships, power dynamics, and mutual understanding to achieve it do not yet exist.

The Table - along with the departments, organizations, and individuals it is consulting and collaborating with - are navigating this together. Albeit at different paces, in different ways, and with different ideas and motivations, there is an acknowledgement that the status quo is unacceptable, and we can do better, together.

The deeper the Table dug into each plan, strategy, framework, procedure, and survey presented to us, the less sure we were about the consultation process. Is the Table being engaged at the right times through planning and implementation? Is the feedback the members are providing impactful? Will the impacts and intentions remain intact throughout planning and implementation? How will the members know what became of their feedback? Is this making a difference at the systems level? The Table simply does not have the capacity at this time, nor the appropriate structure, to follow through from beginning to end. The more input the Table provides, the less it is able to follow up.

As the Table struggles with the consultation process, its members continue to receive reports of racist incidents within the wider community - in workplaces, in schools, in hospitals, etc. When the Table attempts to address these issues, long-standing obstructions stand in the way. Because things have been a certain way for so long, they become widely accepted as immovable and part of standard practice.

## **Pivot**

There remains a lack of accountability and transparency, as well room for thinking and working differently. Power relations live in and through dominant worldviews, norms, bureaucracies, etc. These hinder the Table's ability to help the Government respond to reports of systemic racism and identify supportive structures and processes for PEI's BIPOC communities in the short term. They also hinder its ability to support and create just and anti-racist systems in the long-term.

After a year of work, it became clear to the Table that a new approach is required. It needs to find new ways to make room for thinking and working differently. Doing things how they have always been done holds existing power imbalances in place. The Table decided that it needs to 1) seek assistance from the Premier and his cabinet; 2) build relationships with decision-makers and change-makers within government departments; and 3) work towards processes and practices that support and allow for the continuation of its work.

To kick off this new approach, the Table requested a meeting with the Premier, members of the Executive Council Office, and Ministers of the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, and the Department of Justice and Public Safety. The meeting took place on October 31, 2022 to discuss the Table's successes, challenges, and path forward. The Premier and the Ministers committed to ongoing collaborations to achieve our mutually-reinforcing mandates. The Table is meeting with the Department of Health and Wellness in March and awaits Ministerial follow-ups from the remaining departments.

Early indications of our relationship building approach are encouraging. Centering and nurturing the relationship, rather than focusing strictly on outcomes of meetings, creates space for honest and difficult dialogue. It also grounds all parties to the importance of connection in their work and helps them identify overlapping goals and challenges. This enables co-development of solutions. It also leaves open an important door when potential issues arise in the future.

## Looking forward

One of the Table's priority areas for the upcoming year is mapping out leadership and operational responsibilities for anti-racism work within the province. Given that the Table, Provincial Government, and partners (e.g., community service organizations, community leaders, funding recipients, private sector) are working towards structural change at the systems level, a clear understanding of who leads, supports, monitors, and evaluates this work is required. This is especially critical with additional capacity expected for this work - Independent Commissioner of Systemic Racism, Anti-Racism Grant recipients, the Anti-Racism Office within the ECO, etc. - to ensure effective, impactful collaboration and use of capacity and resources.

In addition to collaboration and partnership, another priority area that the Table will focus on is accountability. It hopes to help cultivate a positive culture that centers justice and thrives on engaging, reflecting, learning, sharing, and repairing harm. From an accountability framework to an Anti-Racism Act, how can each piece of the puzzle play a role in contributing to this positive culture and transformative changes at the systems level? The Table will work to support the ECO and provide leadership in answering these questions.

Although the pace of progress has been slow, the Table recognizes the enormity of this work and remains committed. It looks forward to collaborating with new and existing partners and stakeholders to advance anti-racism work on the Island. To improve its impact, the Table is actively working to increase the perspectives and lived experiences of its membership, so that it can be better equipped to promote anti-racism through an intersectional lens.

The Table thanks the Premier and ECO Staff, especially Mr. Dante Bazard, for their support.

*Sincerely,*

Stephanie Arnold, Chair  
Nancy Peters-Doyle, Co-chair  
Leticia LaRosa  
Linnell Edwards  
Malak Sherin Nassar  
Nnena Lucille Ukwa  
Satyajit Sen  
Tamara Steele  
Thea Xi Du  
Wanda Lyall