



Canadian Muslim communities mobilize to respond to pandemic

Religious leaders, medical experts, and community advocates create national taskforce

March 26, 2020 – Mississauga, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Muslim medical experts, religious leaders, and community advocates have come together to form the Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force (CMCTF) to ensure that Canadian Muslim communities have the information and resources they need to deal with the current pandemic.

This national collaboration includes over 20 organizations and includes various experts.

“While each member of the task force will lead and be responsible for their own COVID-19 initiatives, the specific mandate of this task force is to create a platform for collaboration between medical, religious and community organizations across the country as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves,” said Dr. M. Hashim Khan, a respirologist in Toronto, board member of the Muslim Medical Association of Canada and co-chair of the task force.

“Members will update each other about their activities, share ideas, knowledge, experiences and resources, help identify gaps and community needs and promote a unified approach towards addressing the numerous challenges that lie ahead,” added Khan.

With Ramadan around the corner, and a variety of other necessary changes to religious rituals, including burials and funeral practices, this collaboration will ensure decisions are made with the best health information and relevant religious guidance in mind.

“It is critical that Canadian Muslims do everything they can to help support the effort to contain this virus and help to preserve the health and well-being of our communities,” said Imam Refaat Mohamed, president of the Canadian Council of Imams and a founding member of the task force.

“We commend the difficult decisions being made by our Prime Minister, Premiers and other officials. We appreciate the due diligence of our public health system and the sacrifices our heroic frontline healthcare workers are and will be making,” said Rabia Khedr, CEO of DEEN Support Services, executive director of the Muslim Council of Peel and co-chair of the task force.

“Furthermore, we appreciate the extremely difficult decisions made by our Imams and community leaders who continue to feel the burden of suspending congregational daily and Friday prayers and closing mosques to the public to guarantee physical distancing, at a time when many Canadians need solace in such sanctuaries,” said Khedr.

A large number of community organizations are already working together across the country to provide food and supplies relief packs for vulnerable and at-risk groups during this state of emergency. Financial support for individuals and non-profit or charitable institutions, mental health, housing and children’s education are a few of the community needs that have already been identified and where collaborative work has begun.

Canadian Muslim physicians have also kickstarted various public education, advocacy and advisory, knowledge-creation and sharing, peer support and medical equipment initiatives.

The Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force invites Muslim community organizations from coast to coast with COVID-19 pandemic initiatives to join them in this work and add their voice to the CMCTF's official declaration, reproduced below and available on the task force's website and social media pages.

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DECLARATION

The CMCTF is committed to the following terms of reference:

1. The CMCTF is an intersectoral collaborative platform, not a separate organization, whereby members work together with professionalism, mutual respect, unity and share knowledge, experiences and resources for the benefit of all Canadians.
2. The CMCTF and its members will promote and support the initiatives that are launched by each member through their online and social media channels, with the goal of reaching as many people as possible.
3. The CMCTF will collaborate with other international Muslim COVID-19 task forces including in the United States and the United Kingdom, in order to do the same.
4. All CMCTF members will, at the bare minimum, stay abreast with and abide by the recommendations and requirements set forth by local, provincial and federal public health agencies and legal bodies, with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. All CMCTF members will promote and embody all public health measures and interventions, including but not limited to regular handwashing, social distancing and infection control measures.
6. All CMCTF members will work hard to ensure their initiatives strongly consider diversity, equity and inclusion issues, especially with regard to vulnerable and high-risk groups.
7. All CMCTF members promise to help support each other, including mosques, Islamic centres, musallahs, schools and other charities and community organizations that are expected to face financial hardship in the weeks to months ahead.

During such difficult and uncertain times, we have faith in Allah (SWT)'s divine power and ask Him to grant us patience, to protect us and our families from any affliction or suffering, to show mercy to all of humanity, to forgive us for our sins and shortcomings, and to keep us united both during and following this calamity.

SIGNATORIES

MEDICAL

Muslim Medical Association of Canada (MMAC)

SPIRITUAL

Canadian Council of Imams (CCI)

AlMaghrib Institute

Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat (ISIJ) of Toronto

Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)

Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Canada

Jamiat ul Ansar

Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA)

Toronto and Region Islamic Congregation (TARIC)

Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research

RIGHTS & ADVOCACY

National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)

COMMUNITY

DawaNet

DEEN Support Services

Federation of Muslim Women (FMW)

Good Neighbour Project (GNP)

ICNA Sisters Canada

International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF)

Islamic Relief Canada

Muslim Welfare Canada (MWC)

Naseeha

National Zakat Foundation (NZF)

and other independent experts.