

**'Hate signs' in Toronto show need to address racism, says Ontario minister**  
**Homelessness among Indigenous points to 'structural problem', Racialized Young Professionals group says**

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Michael Coteau, Ontario's minister responsible for anti-racism, is trying to get a handle on what racism looks like in the province and what can be done about it. (CBC)

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Ontario's new anti-racism directorate is asking people to share their thoughts on how to address systemic racism and eliminate barriers for Indigenous and racialized communities, during a public forum in Thunder Bay on Saturday.

It's an important time to hold these discussion, says Michael Coteau, the provincial minister responsible for anti-racism and the host of the community meetings, as he points to recent events in Ontario's largest city.

"Even in Toronto there are more hate signs that are appearing, in a city that is so multicultural and there's an expectation always that people get along," he said in an interview with CBC Thunder Bay.

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The directorate, which has already toured Hamilton, Mississauga, Scarborough, Sudbury, Kitchener Waterloo and London, is hearing some definite themes said Coteau.

"There's frustration toward the system as a whole from people who have felt discrimination in the workplace, discrimination in educational settings and discrimination and racism when it comes to the justice system."

### **'A crisis situation'**

Thunder Bay's Racialized Young Professionals Network plans to attend the meeting to present a list of recommendations focusing on "standing with Indigenous communities," said member Farah Ahmed.

One concern, is the overrepresentation of indigenous people among the chronically homeless, she said.

"That is a structural problem, right there. So that was first and foremost something that we are going to put forth as a recommendation — that this really is a crisis situation and needs to be addressed," Ahmed said.

The group also plans to bring up concerns about First Nations education, policing, mental health and addictions as examples of systemic racism.

The directorate's work will complement public engagement with Indigenous partners to help develop an Indigenous-specific anti-racism strategy, a commitment made as part of Ontario's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, according to the government.

The Thunder Bay stop on the tour takes place Saturday afternoon, from noon to 3 p.m. at the Da Vinci Centre.