

Ontario government hosts public meeting on combating racism

a day ago by: Nicole Dixon



Minister Responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate Michael Coteau visit Thunder Bay Saturday.

THUNDER BAY -- In an effort to eliminate systemic racism in Ontario, the government has reached out to communities across the province for input on addressing the issue.

In February, the Anti-Racism Directorate was created to address and prevent systemic racism in government policy, legislation, programs and services.

On Saturday, the Minister Responsible for the Anti-Racism Directorate Michael Coteau travelled to Thunder Bay to hear the community's opinions on addressing systemic racism.

During an interview Coteau said systemic racism plays an everyday role in the lives of people in Ontario.

"This is something we need to better understand in order to make better policy decisions as a government and to bring more awareness as a society to those issues," Coteau said.

"The main message we keep getting is that once you remove systemic racism or the barriers put in place to prevent people from taking advantage of all the opportunity we have here in Ontario, we are able to build a better province in the end."

The directorate is aiming to eliminate systemic racism in institutions governed or regulated by the Ontario government, increase awareness and understanding of systemic racism, and promote fair practices and policies leading to racial equity.

To achieve these goals the government is focusing on policy, research and evaluation to ensure an anti-racism perspective is applied in government policies, programs and services, public education and awareness, collaboration with communities.

As well as developing a long-term accountable organization, which addresses systemic racism.

"We are having conversations in the community about legislation," Coteau said. "We are looking for ways to develop tools, so organizations can have a better understanding of how systemic racism plays a role in their organization."

The minister has heard many ideas from across the province and he has consulted with thousands.

"We are going to be able to deliver a strategic plan in the New Year, which will look for ways to remove barriers in Ontario surrounding systemic racism," he said.

"That's why we are here, we know we cannot build just one strategy that can excel we will have a separate strategy for First Nations communities as well."

Coteau added that the province is working with all the Ministries to put a "race focused lens" on the issues related to racism.

At this point the province has a focus on education, employment, and items surround youth justice.

"There's many different areas we've talked about, but you'll have to wait for us to come out with a strategy that will really go specific on the issues that we need to address."

Coteau added the province will present a strategy in the spring with the commitments surrounding the removal of systemic racism from institutions.

"I think the most important part will be based on the conversations we've been having over the last few months and I believe Ontarians will be proud of the approach we take."

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