

March 9, 2023

Mr. Sébastien Payet
Committee Clerk, Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights
Chambers Building, 10th Floor
Ottawa, ON

Re: Islamophobia in Canada study

Delivered by email

Dear Mr. Payet,

Thank you very much for allowing the National NewsMedia Council (NNC) to make this written submission to the Senate's Standing Committee on Human Rights as it studies the important issue of Islamophobia in Canada.

By way of introduction, the NNC is a voluntary, self-regulatory organization composed of more than 600 news media organizations across the country. Our mandate is two-fold: first, we serve as a forum for complaints against our members, and second, we provide public education services that explain the importance of quality journalism in a free and democratic society.

We acknowledge the testimony presented during the March 6, 2023 meeting of this committee that incidents of Islamophobia are on the rise. We are heartened that this committee is undertaking its current study to better understand the factors that may exacerbate the issue and provide an opportunity to address it.

That being said, the NNC can report that the number of complaints we have received over the past several years on the subject under consideration has been limited. In reviewing our complaint files for this submission, we would like to draw the committee's attention to three particular cases that may be relevant to concerns about Islamophobia. These cases are:

[2016-16: Moher vs London Free Press](#)

[2018-21: Singh vs Toronto Sun](#)

[2018-59: Hunter vs Toronto Sun](#)

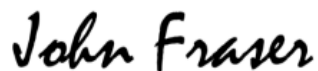
While the NNC does not receive frequent complaints on the matter, as noted, the issue would generally be considered with respect to widely-accepted standards and best practices on the journalistic treatment of sensitive issues, which includes taking appropriate care and attention to language when reporting on race, racism, or bias against a social or political group.

As a self-regulatory organization, it is important to point out that the NNC does not dictate to its members what stories to cover. That determination is rightly left to the individual news judgment of reporters and editors at our member titles. Similarly, our organization does not track the frequency of coverage related to any specific community or issue; rather, we are a complaint-driven body that evaluates whether journalism standards in published works have been breached.

We do note for the committee's consideration that general complaints about sensitive issues, particularly reporting on race and racism, have been on the rise over the past several years. To that end, the NNC has consulted with editors, journalists, and academics to compile a [best practices](#) document for newsrooms about how their organizations can responsibly report on issues related to race and racism. While these are guidelines, they do offer some insight into how the journalism industry continues to evolve in its practices to meet the needs of an evolving Canadian society.

On behalf of the NNC, I look forward to being kept abreast of the review undertaken once all perspectives on this important issue have been duly considered.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Fraser". The script is cursive and fluid.

John Fraser
Executive chair
National NewsMedia Council of Canada