



April 14, 2021

Dear Presidents and Principals:

**RE: Actions to address systemic discrimination**

I am writing to you to better understand what steps your institutions are taking to lead in creating and sustaining equitable and inclusive education environments.

Last December, [I wrote to all public colleges and universities in Ontario](#) to advise you that the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) had received concerning reports that Indigenous, Black and racialized students were experiencing significant discrimination, xenophobia and targeting on campuses and in academic environments across Ontario. Students and student groups described in detail how school administrators and institutional mechanisms for handling formal and informal complaints had failed to effect change. I called on your institutions to take meaningful steps to better understand the experiences of students who are seeking more respectful, equitable and inclusive academic environments, and to make certain that discrimination and harassment are not tolerated. This was in keeping with the OHRC's commitment to use its mandate and powers to promote and strengthen a human rights culture and address systemic discrimination in Ontario's education institutions.

Over a dozen academic institutions have responded to our letter detailing their institutional structures and ongoing efforts to address systemic discrimination, including anti-Black racism and Indigenous racism, and what steps they are taking to prevent future occurrences. Meanwhile, students continue to come forward with concerns of racial discrimination and harassment that were not adequately investigated or addressed by administrators.

Your institutions have the duty to create safe and inclusive places to study, and to remove systemic barriers to participation. To this end, I am writing to ask that you identify what actions your administrations are taking to provide equitable and inclusive learning environments, including your efforts to investigate discrimination and harassment in a timely and effective way. Please respond by writing to [cco@ohrc.on.ca](mailto:cco@ohrc.on.ca) by April 30, 2021. The OHRC will review your responses to identify best practices, barriers and gaps, and share our findings with you and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

It is critical for your institutions to set an example and make sure that you foster learning environments that are welcoming, inclusive and free of all forms of discrimination and harassment. I urge you to work collaboratively with stakeholders to take action on this important matter.

To support the OHRC's commitment to public accountability and responsibility to serve the people of Ontario, this letter and the responses received may be made public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ena Chadha', written in a cursive style.

Ena Chadha, LL.B., LL.M.  
Chief Commissioner

cc: Hon. Ross Romano, Minister of Colleges and Universities  
Hon. Doug Downey, Attorney General  
OHRC Commissioners