

Thursday April 22nd, 2021

Respected and Honourable Premier Ford, Minister Elliott, Minister Jones and Dr. Williams,

We are writing to you seeking prompt public clarification of permissible drive-thru religious services during this ongoing third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force was born after an unprecedented proactive call for the suspension of large prayers in congregation across the country on Thursday March 12th, 2020, in advance of the national lockdown announcement, by the Muslim Medical Association of Canada, the Canadian Council of Imams and concerned community leaders. During the initial lockdown last spring and when our communities reopened in the summer, we supported religious leadership and communities in safely reopening mosques and celebrating Ramadan, Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha. We have led the way – at times beyond what the government has mandated – in ensuring the [safety](#) and security of our Canadian Muslim communities and by extension, all Canadians.

Food insecurity has increased over the course of the pandemic and food banks during Ramadan play a critical role in supporting our communities. During this holy month, which began last week, Canadian Muslims generously donate meals to those that have been made vulnerable, as an observance of their faith.

Following the Ontario government's most recent imposition of strict lockdown measures including the now-renegeed policing measures, despite apparent legality, several Ontario Muslim communities have cancelled food bank drives and drive-thru pre-packaged *Iftar* dinners. Unfortunately, as predominantly racialized communities in Canada, we are all too familiar with unwarranted and disproportionately targeted police surveillance and enforcement. While we understand that "Drive-Thru services" will be permitted for houses of worship, it is not clear if this includes the aforementioned services that many marginalized community members critically depend on. These outdoor services would also safely provide some semblance of community to the 500,000 Ontarian Muslims that are spending another month of Ramadan under strict lockdown conditions with extremely limited access to their mosques. Finally, this would allow community members and institutions to continue supporting local restaurants and businesses while promoting adherence to and acceptance of the measures in place.

We therefore urgently seek clarifications and written assurances, regarding the following:

- 1. That drive-thru *Iftar* dinners and food bank drives, organized outdoors with infection control measures in place and scheduled pickups, are considered essential and permitted for houses of worship in Ontario for the whole month of Ramadan.**
- 2. That those attending these outdoor drive-thru services will not be harassed or ticketed by the police, under current or proposed legislation.**

Your timely leadership and direction in this matter is much appreciated. Thank you for your time and consideration and we look forward to your expedient response.

Sh. Zahir Bacchus, Rufaida Mohammed & Dr. M. Hashim Khan
Co-Chairs, Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force (CMCTF)