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House of Commons passes anti-Islamophobia motion

Non-binding motion condemns Islamophobia, religious discrimination and calls for committee study

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Passing the anti-Islamophobia motion

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M-103, a controversial effort to officially condemn Islamophobia, passed in the House of Commons. But, what impact will the non-binding motion have?

The House of Commons has passed M-103, a non-binding motion condemning Islamophobia and religious discrimination.

All NDP and nearly all Liberal MPs supported the motion, which passed 201-91. The majority of Conservative MPs voted against, with leadership candidate Michael Chong and Simcoe North MP Bruce Stanton voting in favour. Mississauga Liberal MP Gagan Sikand and Barrie Conservative MP Alex Nuttall both abstained.

The vote follows months of bitter debate and a series of protests and counter-protests across the country over whether the private member's motion would limit free speech or single out Islam for special treatment in Canadian law.

- [5 things you need to know about M-103](#)
- [Anti-Islamophobia motion could stifle speech, critics say](#)

It had additional symbolic significance in the emotional aftermath of the Jan. 29 mosque shooting in Quebec City, where six Muslim men were killed.

The motion was tabled by Mississauga-Erin Mills Liberal MP Iqra Khalid on Dec. 5, 2016. She spoke to reporters after the motion passed Thursday.


"I'm really happy that the vote today has shown positive support for this motion and I'm really looking forward to the committee taking on this study," she said.

Khalid's motion calls on the government to do three things:

- Condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination.
- Quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear.
- Compel the Commons heritage committee to develop a government-wide approach for reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination, including Islamophobia.

The latter would require the heritage committee to collect data on hate crime reports, conduct needs assessments for affected communities and present findings within eight months.

Liberals rejected an attempt by Saskatchewan Conservative MP David Anderson to [remove the word "Islamophobia"](#) from the motion and change the wording to "condemn all forms of systemic racism, religious intolerance and discrimination of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus and other religious communities.



Protesters clash at a demonstration about the anti-Islamophobia motion in Montreal on March 4. There were several protests and counter-protests about M-103 across the country this winter. (Graham Hughes/Canadian Press)

Anderson argued Islamophobia was not defined in Khalid's motion, and that its inclusion contributed to widespread confusion and fears about the effect on freedom of speech.

Khalid told reporters she didn't think changing the wording of her motion was the result of broad consultation and changing it wouldn't have led to Conservative support.

"It was a really collaborative effort amongst all Canadians and amongst all parliamentarians and I was not able to find consensus," Khalid said.

"Really, changing the wording of the motion would have watered it down and I think the committee can really look into this if it is an issue."

Anderson, the Conservative who tried to amend the motion, said he didn't see much difference between himself and Khalid on the issue after the vote.



Saskatchewan Conservative MP David Anderson said he's on the same 'wavelength' as the Liberal MP who tabled M-103, despite voting against the motion. (CBC)

"I think that many of us have wanted to have a mature discussion about this for a long time, and I think actually Ms. Khalid and I would be on the exact same wavelength on that issue," Anderson said.

"The committee can do a good job and we can have a discussion about what this means for Canada, the role of Islam in Canada, and it's time we had that discussion and did it on a different level than we have over the last month."

M-103 generated controversy on social media and through online petitions, with some incorrectly suggesting it is a "law" or a "bill" rather than a non-binding motion. Some have raised concerns it would lead to some form of Shariah law in Canada.

The NDP caucus voted in favour of both versions of the motion.

Liberal MP abstains

Gagan Sikand, the Liberal MP who abstained from the vote, said he made the decision based on correspondence with his constituents.

"Since the residents of Mississauga-Streetsville were fairly evenly split, I was of the opinion that abstaining best reflected everyone," he wrote in a Facebook post.

Sikand said he will "always" condemn Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination.

Some MPs, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, were not in the House for the vote.

42% of Canadians would vote against, survey suggests

A [survey](#) published Thursday by the Angus Reid Institute suggests that 42 per cent

of Canadians would vote against the motion, while just 29 per cent would vote in favour of it. About two-thirds of Conservative voters were against M-103, while opinion was more divided among Liberals and New Democrats.

The poll suggests that Canadians have doubts the motion will accomplish anything. A majority of respondents said that the motion would have no real impact. Another 31 per cent felt it was a threat to freedom of speech, while 12 per cent believed it would help "reduce anti-Muslim attitudes and discrimination."

The survey was conducted between March 13 and 17, interviewing 1,511 Canadians adults who were members of an online panel. A probabilistic sample of this size would yield a margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percentage points.



Iqra Khalid speaks to reporters after the M-103 vote

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