



## **Black Opportunity Fund Calls for an Independent Review of the Procurement Process for Canada's \$200 million Black-led Philanthropic Fund**

*Black community organization calls on Ministers Hussein, Jaczek and Gould to take immediate action to ensure a fair, transparent and equitable RFP process*

For immediate release

**February 2, 2023 (Toronto, ON)**— The federal government's procurement process to select an administrator for the \$200M Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund (the "**Fund**") is being called into question by one of the major applicants for the Fund.

On Friday, January 27 after receiving not a single question from officials at Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) about its 500+ page application, Black Opportunity Fund received a brief email from the government that stated that ESDC declined to proceed with its application. Black Opportunity Fund has not been engaged by government officials about its application since the submission deadline of November 25, 2022.

"It is shocking to learn that in less than two months, including the holiday closure, that Employment and Social Development Canada has apparently selected an administrator without even asking a single question to a qualified applicant. It is simply impossible to conduct the required due diligence for a \$200 million fund in just 6 weeks.," says Craig Wellington, Executive Director of Black Opportunity Fund. "How, all of a sudden, can the Government of Canada conduct robust due diligence for a process it has never done before in 6 weeks when other similar processes have taken significantly longer."

Black Opportunity Fund submitted a transformational and detailed proposal with a Black-led and 100% Black-invested approach, with a strong consortium of partners including Toronto Foundation, RockCreek, Michaëlle Jean Foundation and the Black Canadian Fundraisers Collective. Over 130 individuals, community organizations and other allies from across Canada provided letters of support for our application.

Black Opportunity Fund has issued a letter of appeal to Helena Jaczek, Minister of Public Services and Procurement; Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development; and Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Housing, urging the government to take the following actions:



1. Provide a detailed and public **written explanation** of the review process, the evaluation categories and criteria, and the composition of and qualifications of the review team.
2. An **immediate stay** on announcing the identity of the successful proponent until the issues raised in the appeal letter are resolved in a transparent manner.
3. An **urgent meeting** with the Deputy Ministers of ESDC and Procurement and Public Services and Procurement Canada with all proponents with respect to the issues raised in our letter.
4. An **independent review** of the procurement process for the Fund to be conducted by either the Auditor General or other arms-length party from this government.

Black Opportunity Fund is calling out the glaring and significant omissions to due process and transparency in the evaluation process for one of the most important investments in Black communities in Canadian history. When the federal government originally announced the Fund in April 2021, Black Opportunity Fund called for a formal RFP process to ensure that the assessment was conducted with a high degree of transparency and integrity.

“This is \$200 million of public funds. While we applaud this investment in the Black community and will support any legitimate winner, we cannot condone an unfair process,” said Wellington. “Over the last few years, there have been concerns raised about the government’s procurement processes, including to the Black community and, unfortunately, this is yet another example.”

BOF is hopeful that public awareness will allow a fresh review and transparent evaluation of the government’s rushed and opaque procurement process.

“It is more important to have a transparent and rigorous review, rather than to rush the process in order to make an announcement during Black History Month.” stated Wellington.



**About Black Opportunity Fund:**

Black Opportunity Fund (BOF) is a community-led registered Canadian charitable organization, whose mandate is to dismantle anti-Black racism by establishing a sustainable pool of capital to fund Black-led businesses and Blackled not for profit organizations and charities, in order to improve the social and economic well-being of Canada's Black communities. The fund will catalyze the cultural, socio-economic, institutional, and political change required to enable Canada's diverse Black communities to thrive. Black Opportunity Fund will prioritize initiatives around education, health, women, criminal justice, entrepreneurship, arts & culture, and youth that impact the quality of life in Black communities across Canada.

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