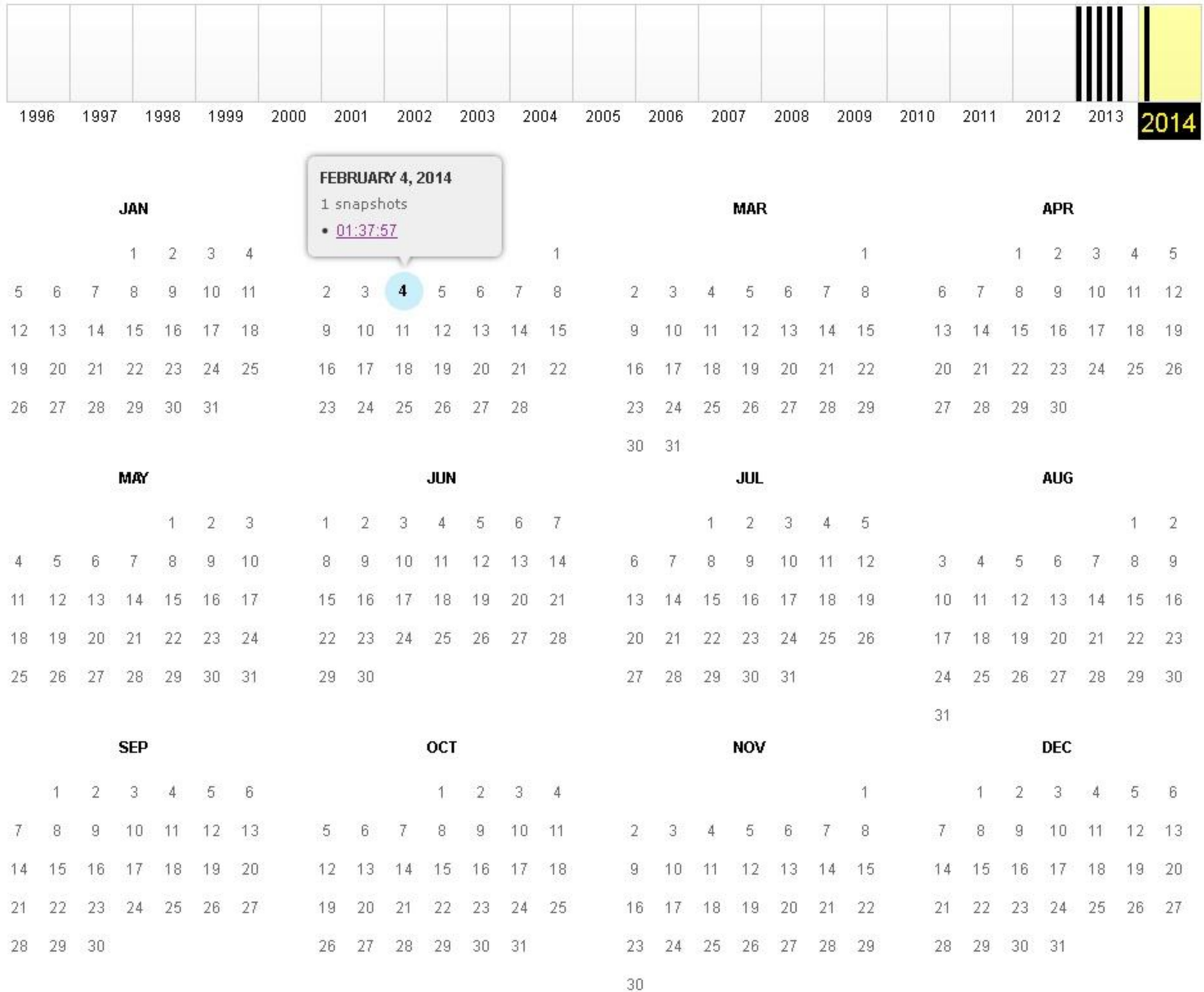


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As mentioned above, the basic unit of the Association is the usra. A detailed explanation of the functioning of the usra is beyond the scope of this document, but what follows is a brief overview. The usra is a gathering of individuals, usually around 3 to 6 men or women, who undertake a program of self-purification, self-development and activism together. The usra is not merely a halaqa (study circle) in which people study or plan activities; rather it is an attempt to build the Muslim community a few individuals at a time.

The Prophet Mohamed alerted his companions to the fact that personal salvation is related to communal relations. In one prophetic teaching (hadith) he said to his companions, "You shall not enter into paradise until you truly attain faith. You shall not attain faith until you come to love each other. Shall I inform you of a means of attaining that love? Spread peace (salam) amongst yourselves." In another prophetic teaching, the Prophet stated, "Shall I tell you about that which 'shaves' - not the hair, but the religion (Islam)? Acrimony, distrust and infighting." The Prophet also reminded his companions and all subsequent generations of his followers that love for the sake of Allah is a sign of the highest faith, and that it is rewarded with that highest of rewards: being in the shade of Allah on the Final Day.

It is our understanding of these texts and our reading of the Quran and the life of the prophet (seerah) that has impressed within us the conviction that the overall situation of Muslims will not change, indeed cannot change, unless we begin to re-establish in our hearts love, compassion and fraternity. The usra is the vehicle for this process.

Through the program of the usra, each member of MAC learns and strives to purify his or her relationship to Allah, adherence to the prophetic tradition (sunnah), and commitment to the service of his or her fellow human beings.

Every month, a number of usra that are in the same city or region come together for a night to extend those feelings of compassion and love that are developed within the usra, that they may also apply across usra. The program of that monthly gathering is focused entirely on tazkiya.

Through the structure of the usra, we encourage each other to commit to certain practices: praying on time; praying in congregation (jama'ah); performing the supererogatory prayers (sunnat al rawatib) associated with each prayer; fasting outside of Ramadan (preferably every Monday and Thursday as well as the three middle days of each lunar month); reading morning and evening remembrances (athkar) and becoming accustomed to donating a small amount of money to charities on a regular basis.

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#### How Is the Muslim Association of Canada governed?

The Muslim Association of Canada is a membership-based organization. The values we hold most dear are those of fraternity, compassion, respect and consultation. Therefore, the ultimate direction and policies of the Association rest in the hands of the general membership. The highest authority of the Association is the National Convention. Delegates to the National Convention are elected by individual chapters on the basis of proportional representation. The basic unit of the Association is the usra (see below). Each chapter has one or more usra. The National Convention meets at least once a year and may meet more frequently if the need arises.

Every four years, the National Convention elects 9 members of the Association to form the Board of Directors. At its first meeting of the new term, the Board elects from among those 9 members a President, as well as a Chair of the Board. The President is the Chief Operating Officer of the Association and he convenes an executive committee to assist him in executing the plans and objectives of the Association. The Board of Directors meets at least quarterly.

Every four years, the National Convention sets priorities for the electoral cycle. These priorities are based on the opinions expressed by the members in each chapter. The Board of Directors frames and details these priorities and instructs the Executive Committee to prepare a plan which aims to actualize these priorities.

Once it is approved by the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee's four-year plan is shared with the individual chapters and each chapter frames its own plans in light of the overall Association plan.

At its annual meeting, the National Convention holds the Board and Executive accountable for progress made during the preceding year.

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A Chapter is one of the basic units of the Association. At the moment, each city in which there are active MAC usrah represents a chapter. MAC members in each city help to select one of their own as Chapter Leader. The Chapter Leader forms a council with responsibilities mirroring those of the Executive Committee e.g. Education, Youth, Membership...etc.

Some chapters have the added level of complexity of administering community projects such as schools, mosques, information centers or youth centers. The governance of these projects is through individuals boards but the chapter is ultimately accountable for the proper administration of these projects.

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The Muslim community in Canada has seen tremendous growth over the last number of years, particularly over the last decade. There are indeed many organizations working on behalf of the Muslim community in various areas. We believe that the Muslim Association of Canada is playing a unique role on the Canadian Muslim landscape. Furthermore, we believe that at this point in time in the development of the Muslim community in Canada, no single organization can hope to satisfy all the needs of the community. Indeed, in that regard, a plurality of organizations is not only acceptable but necessary.

There is ample precedent within Islamic history for the ethics and spirit that should govern the relationship of Muslim organizations with each other: namely, fraternity, compassion, respect and consultation. MAC works very closely with the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and has cooperated with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), and the Canadian chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) on individual projects. In addition, MAC members play a vibrant role in many local Muslim organizations across the country.

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We believe that for change to occur in the world around us, it must first occur within each of us individually. The words of the Qur'an are eloquent enough: "Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change that which is within them." We are guided by the words of Imam Ali, who said, "Your most immediate challenge is yourselves. If you overcome them, you are more likely to succeed in any other challenge. But if you fail in this first challenge, you are more likely fail in any other."

Centuries later, Hasan Al-Hudaibi, the second General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood movement framed this principle in a manner that still resonates with many Muslims: "Establish Islam in your hearts and you will see it established around you."

Based on this understanding, we in the Muslim Association of Canada believe that self-purification, self-development and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience are the route to success both in achieving the pleasure of Allah individually and in bringing happiness to people.

The concept of self-development deserves some elaboration. We believe that self-development is a process that must combine study and practice. Thus we place equal emphasis on learning as we do on community work. It is this combination of "ilm (knowledge), tazkiya (self-purification) and "amal (work) that distinguishes MAC from other efforts in Canada. Scholars have long recognized the pitfalls of unbalanced work (both in the sense of personal worship as well as "activism" in modern terminology) or acquisition of knowledge. In the words of one scholars, "The pitfall of acquiring knowledge is that it leads to arrogance. The pitfall of work is that it leads to hypocrisy. Therefore do not engage in one without the other, rather balance the two even if that leads to doing less of one or the other, so long as you are engaged in both."

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We believe that cooperation among Muslims in areas of public good is a religious duty. It is our policy to lend our support to any joint effort that intersects with our objectives and our mandate.

Members of the Muslim Association of Canada are active in many local, regional and national organizations. However, to the extent that members of MAC invest large amounts of energy and time in specific organizations, the leadership of MAC tries to ensure that the activities of these organizations help in achieving the goals that members of MAC have set as priorities.

Finally, we believe that competition among Muslims organizations can only be unhealthy. Our motto is that as Muslims, we should cooperate in areas in which we agree and excuse each other with respect to areas in which we disagree.

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There are a 4 categories of membership in MAC: regular, active, associate, and youth. Regular and active members are voting members and can participate in the election of National Convention delegates as well as serve in various capacities within the Association. To become a regular member, one must have participated in a program of self-development acceptable to the Education Committee. On occasion, some of the activities of the Association are open only to regular and active members. The requirements for associate and youth membership are less stringent. associate and youth members are non-voting members but may participate in many of the Association's activities and give input and advice.

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The creation of the different categories of membership is not intended to be elitist or exclusionary. The intent behind the creation of differential levels of membership is to ensure that the overall objectives, goals and direction of the Association are determined solely by those individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to the vision of the Association. This is not to say that active or regular members are necessarily better than associate members or Muslims who are not members of MAC. One of the elements of our ethos is to believe other Muslims to be better than ourselves and to continually strive to improve ourselves. However, we do have a firm belief that our philosophy and vision are superior to others and we strive to ensure that they are actualized.

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The Muslim Association of Canada is made up of individuals like yourself. We try our best to live up to the ideals to which we subscribe. Like other human beings, we err, falter and occasionally lose our way. However, we believe that our duty is to continually strive and our faith is that Allah's help is with those who strive towards him. As Allah says in the Quran, "And those who strive towards us we shall surely guide to our path and Allah is with those who do good." And as the Prophet instructed us, "Allah does not give up on you until you yourselves give up."

Al-Imam Al-Banna described the attitude of some individuals who insist on asking others what they are achieving. He asked what makes a chair a chair. If one takes away one leg, then another, then another and so on, is there a chair left? Similarly, our Association is made up of individuals. If each individual withholds participation, then there is no Association.

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**What is the relationship between MAC and the Muslim Brotherhood?**

The Muslim Association of Canada is a wholly Canadian organization. The decision-making process and authority rest entirely with the membership of MAC through its governing bodies, namely the National Convention and the Board of Directors. The focus of the Muslim Association of Canada as defined in our vision is on service within the Canadian Muslim context. One of the objectives of the Muslim Association of Canada is to cooperate with Muslim organizations on local, national and international levels.

The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest of the revivalist Islamic movement and was founded in 1928 by Hasan Al-Banna.

Much of the philosophy and vision of the Muslim Association of Canada derives from the heritage of the Muslim Brotherhood. Our commitment to the model of individual self-development expressed in communal organization is based largely on the vision of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hasan Al-Banna. While the Muslim Association of Canada does not represent the Muslim Brotherhood, it is important to describe here in some detail what we believe are the areas of shared heritage.

We believe that Hasan Al-Banna attempted to revive, among Muslims, the understanding of Islam in a moderate comprehensive manner. In other words, he tried to revive Islam in a manner that would best approximate what Islam would have looked like had the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, lived and preached Islam in our own time. Furthermore, Al-Banna succeeded in putting together a dynamic organizational structure that brought that understanding to life. Islam, after the efforts of Al-Banna and his brothers, came out of the domain of personal worship and into the arena of public policy. Muslims emerged from a mindset characterized by feelings of inferiority and uncertainty to one of clarity and confidence.

It is now 75 years since Al-Banna initiated that blessed effort. The efforts of the Muslim Association of Canada are separate from the writings and organization of Al-Banna by time and space. The assertion that much of our philosophy and vision derive from the efforts of Al-Banna should not be taken to mean that we adopt in wholesale fashion all of the ideas developed and put forward by Al-Banna or the Muslim Brotherhood. However, we believe that the efforts of Al-Banna and subsequent generations of the Muslim Brotherhood remain the truest reflection of Islamic practice in the modern era.

Al-Banna was not alone in his aims and vision. He was preceded and followed by many who shared a similar vision and worked to achieve similar goals. The blessing with which Allah has endowed Muslims is greater than to be restricted to a few names but examples include AbdulHamid Ibn Badees of Algeria, Al-Sayyid Al-Sanusi Al-Kabir of Libya, Badee-ul-Zaman Sa'eed Nursi of Turkey, Maulana Abul A'ala Maududi of Pakistan and Al-Sayyid Abul Hasan Al-Nadwi of India.

One other characteristic that has distinguished the Muslim Brotherhood and the scholars the movement has inspired is the ability to deal with modernity. In dealing with the challenges of our time, we do not seek to merely recreate the past. To paraphrase a contemporary philosopher, our feet are firmly planted in our own age and country but our eyes are surveying the world and the rich heritage of Muslims.

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**How does the Muslim Association of Canada see Muslims' role in Canada**

We envision a time when:

- The prevalent understanding of Islam is one of balance, constructive engagement, and relevance to life.
- The understanding of Islam and Islamic values are commonplace in Canadian society and Islam and Muslims are not perceived as alien;
- Muslims are well represented in various aspects of Canadian society including the political, social, legal, and media circles ; and
- MAC is the premier Islamic Organization in Canada articulating vision, developing leadership, mobilizing grassroots, and offering institutional services.

Our mission is to establish an Islamic presence in Canada that is balanced, constructive, and integrated, though distinct, in the social fabric and culture of Canada.

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**How is the Muslim Association of Canada financed?**

The Muslim Association of Canada is financed primarily through the contributions of its members. Each member is encouraged to contribute a portion of his or her income to the Association so that the Association may carry out its objectives. In addition, each of the projects of the Association aims to be financially self-sufficient. The Association conducts fund-raising for specific projects or as the need arises.

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**What is the view of the Muslim Association of Canada on Terrorism?**

The Muslim Association of Canada unequivocally condemns the use of violence against non-combatants. Islam views war as a vehicle of destruction and hence only as a last resort to right a wrong or to lift oppression.

The word "terrorism" has become overused and highly politicized. Numerous thinkers have questioned the utility of the term given the highly political nature of its use. Nevertheless, the misuse of the word by some for political gain should not obscure the reprehensible nature of some of the events that have taken place in recent years.

**What is the position of the Muslim Association of Canada on Jihad?**

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**What is the position of the Muslim Association of Canada on Jihad?**

Jihad encompasses both the spiritual struggle with one's own self as well as physical struggle against opponents. A detailed study of the objectives, ethics and limitations of war is beyond the scope of this document but such studies have been conducted and published in several languages. Notable examples include: "The Texts on War in Islam" by Dr W. Al-Zuhayli (in Arabic).

In short, we believe that international law today is consistent with Islamic principles particularly with respect to the engagement of international bodies that attempt to resolve conflicts through nonviolent means.

Muslims in Canada have entered into a social contract " a mithaq " to live according to the laws of this land. It is the unalienable right of every Canadian, including Muslim Canadians, to challenge any law they deem unjust or immoral. Citizens living in a democracy have the right to organize opposition to such laws including demonstrating, petitioning and otherwise publicly campaigning against such laws. Furthermore, every citizen has the moral right to engage in non-violent civil disobedience to protest against such laws, provided he or she does so in a forthright manner and is prepared to assume the consequences. Muslim tradition attaches signal importance to the avoidance of civil strife (fitna) and we believe Muslim Canadians have manifest obligation to maintain the peace and security of this society.

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**What is MAC's Stand on Political Involvement?**

The Muslim Association of Canada is a registered Charity. As such, it is bound by the rules of Canada Revenue Agency with respect to political activities by registered charities.

At this point in time in the development of the Association, our focus is on educational and community effort, in particular relating to youth development. A number of advocacy organizations are active in Canada on behalf of Muslims and our interactions with those organizations are governed by our interactions with organizations in general. We cooperate with and support organizations with whom we share objectives.

Broadly speaking, however, we believe that it is essential for Muslims to be engaged in the political process. The Prophet is recorded to have said that giving advice (nasiha) is part of our religion (deen). Advising or enjoining what is right and rejecting what is evil is integral to being Muslim.

We are blessed to be living in a country in which individual citizens can have a say in choosing the government. We encourage Muslims to become aware of the platforms and objectives of the various political parties whether at the municipal, provincial or federal levels and to organize and vote according to what they see as the best interests of our society and country.

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MAC is the leading Muslim organization in Canada. MAC works with our most experienced youth workers, outreach workers and education workers to design national programs. Our programs are designed to ensure that they maximize on benefits to the community. Subsequently, volunteers in all of our chapters across Canada are trained so they can implement and run our programs.

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There are several ways to contact MAC.

- If you have an administrative questions or nationally related issues such as tax receipts or partnership, contact our Head Office.
- If you have a question regarding your local MAC Chapter such as introducing a new program in your city, contact your local chapter office.
- If you have a question related to a specific event or service, contact the organization team directly through the event or service page.
- If you have a question related to a MAC school or center, contact the school or center administration directly.

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MAC is consciously inclusive of Muslims across ethnic, gender, and generational lines. We serve all people irrespective of faith, race, ethnicity or gender. There are many opportunities for any individual of any age to get involved with MAC. Whether you choose to attend our events and benefit from them, volunteer at an event, join the leadership team of an event, become an associate or youth member or join MAC's membership there is a role that you can play.

You can get involved in a diverse range of programs that are implemented in various areas such as in your local center or mosque, on your high school or university campus or in the larger community. The important thing is that you determine what is most important to you and what you are interested in most and finally connect with us and start getting involved.

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