



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable John Horgan, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
West Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
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Honourable David Eby, MLA
Attorney General
Room 232 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Canada

May 27, 2021

Dear Premier Horgan & Minister Eby,

Thank you for your government's recent proclamation of Anti-Racism Awareness Week, the timing of which is appropriate given the anniversaries of the Komagata Maru incident, the death of George Floyd and Asian Heritage Month.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to see horrific acts of racism and hate targeting a spectrum of people here in British Columbia. A recent Bloomberg article has labelled Vancouver as the anti-Asian racism capital of North America, with a 700 per cent year-over-year increase in racist incidents in Vancouver, more than any other city in North America.

We all must take a stand and speak out against these hateful and cowardly acts because all British Columbians have the right to live without fear of violence or discrimination. We need to protect the safety and well-being of all British Columbians. And we also need to be seen to be taking concrete steps that amount to more than just sympathy.

It is vital that we assist and educate British Columbians to recognize and respond to issues of racism and bigotry and that we act with urgency. We need to educate our children and our society to develop tolerance and respect for all people, no matter their race, religion, or background.



This is why we are calling on you and your government to urgently consider the following concrete action items:

1. Activate the Select Standing Committee on Education to review policies and actions that have contributed to the rise in racism, and conduct a comprehensive examination of the current state of harassment and racism and recommend legislative and policy measures. The task force should consult with municipal representatives and key civil society organizations and community representatives to provide concrete recommendations.
2. Fund an Anti-Racism Secretariat to monitor and quantify discrimination, promote preventive measures, and report to the Legislature by the end of this calendar year on progress.
3. Quickly implement and activate the hotline for British Columbians to report racist incidents announced on April 30, 2021.
4. Increase funding to multiculturalism and anti-racism programs.
5. Develop more educational tools and resources for the K-12 education curriculum to combat racism and educate students about the contributions of immigrants to British Columbia.
6. Ensure local police forces have sufficient resources to respond quickly and fully investigate hate crimes and racist incidents, and make available online reporting and other online resources as has been recently implemented by the Vancouver Police Department.
7. Ensure that the Attorney General's Crown Prosecution Service treats racist incidents as a priority for charge determinations and prosecutions.
8. Press the federal government on amendments to section 718.2 of the Criminal Code with respect to sentencing for hate-inspired crimes to better define hate based on race. There is a serious lack of legislative and judicial guidance on the effect of hate motivation on the penalty for these crimes.
9. Apply to the National NewsMedia Council for a review of media coverage to determine the extent, if any, to which language, visual depictions and editorial content may have conditioned people to accept racial stereotyping and racial intolerance.



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10. Call upon Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Google, as well as major media outlets in Canada to implement a coherent public awareness campaign on racism, and the unacceptable incidents of harassment in recent months, in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of Canada's multiculturalism policy.

Implementing these steps will go a long way to securing a bright and tolerant future for all British Columbians and a future of acceptance where all people can feel safe no matter their race, religion, or background.

The continued expression of empathy and support from political, business, and public institutional leaders in the wake of the massive ramp-up of racist slurs, harassment and violence is welcome. But the true measure of British Columbia's response to the surge in racism will depend on how quickly serious policy measures are undertaken at various levels of jurisdiction to educate the public, punish the perpetrators and provide a solid source of support for those who are affected.

Let us lead by example and demonstrate our commitment to building a better British Columbia that is welcoming and accepting of everyone.

Sincerely,

Teresa Wat

Official Opposition Critic for Tourism, Arts & Culture, & Anti-Racism Initiatives
MLA, Richmond North Centre

CC Shirley Bond, Leader of the Official Opposition