



Statement from Mayor Helps on Systemic Racism in Victoria and the Defacement of Public Art

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For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — Mayor Lisa Helps released the following statement on systemic racism in Victoria and the defacement of the More Justice, More Peace mural:

“It was disappointing to see the vandalism of the More Justice, More Peace mural over the weekend. This is a very challenging situation. There are very difficult conversations that have been happening regarding the systemic racism that exists in our city. And these difficult conversations will continue to happen.

“The new language in the mural fits within the City’s public art policy and is a reflection of the artist’s experience of the past few weeks and months. Vandalism of art in public places is not acceptable.

“What this situation reveals is that we have a lot of work to do as a city – city administration, city council, police department and other institutions in the city – to address systemic racism and to listen to the voices that have been historically marginalized and that continue to be marginalized.

“Even on Council there is disagreement as to the right approach, the right wording. What this means is that difficult conversations lie ahead. This fall we will be developing a Welcoming City Strategy to ensure that the city is welcoming and safe for everyone. This will be a good way to continue these important conversations, just as the Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues have helped to build trust, understanding and connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

“We need to recognize power imbalances, recognize systemic discrimination, recognize that right now there is an “us” and a “them” with different access to power, to institutions, to jobs, to resources, to economic security. A recent Angus Reid survey showed nearly two-thirds of Canadians agree that systemic racism is a serious problem.

“The African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island (AHAVI) says, we need to move beyond the mural and to work as a community to reduce polarization, to address systemic racism – the City working alongside Black, Indigenous, people of colour, working alongside police. Although we’re not all equal – as there is work still to do in this regard – we are all in this together.”

— 30 —

For More Information

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