



June 16, 2020

Commissioner Kasari Govender
Office of the Human Rights Commissioner
#750 – 999 Canada Place
Vancouver, BC V6C 3E1

Commissioner Michael McEvoy
Office of the Information and Privacy
Commissioner for British Columbia
PO Box 9038 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9A4

Dear Commissioners Govender and McEvoy,

During the past several weeks, I have had the opportunity to connect with British Columbians dealing with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. From every corner of the province, I am heartened to hear stories of resiliency as communities come together to care for each other and look after their friends and neighbours.

However, even before the recent events which have made this matter more salient, the Multicultural Advisory Council of British Columbia (which is a legislated body created to provide advice to both the Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism and to me) had urged race and ethnicity-based data collection as a top priority for action. Understanding the difficulties surrounding this issue, which include concerns of stigmatization and privacy, I would like your expert advice knowing that your Offices would have to consider this issue at some point, as well.

I understand there is a long history of this type of data collection in the United States and recent initiatives have begun in the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario. Additionally, in her recent statements Dr. Bonnie Henry has acknowledged it is important to understand that the impact of this pandemic may affect people who are racialized or in racialized communities in different ways.

I am writing to you today to ask for your guidance, advice, and recommendations for action. I would like you to examine how to craft a policy initiative that balances the right to privacy with the call from community advocates, health researchers, and public policy professionals for rigorous and thoughtful data collection, to address systemic racism. Specifically, I would like your recommendations on the following issues or concerns:

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- Issues arising from race and ethnicity-based data collection and dissemination of disaggregated data that protects individual privacy;
- Examples of standards for data collection or management that can be applicable in a British Columbian context;
- Gaps and shortcomings in currently available data sets;
- The need for an intersectional lens that examines race and ethnicity as well as class, gender, geography, immigration status and the challenges of first-generation immigrants, and other data points;
- Methodologies for gathering and reporting statistics in a credible and permanent manner; and
- Transparency policies to ensure disaggregated data is available for scholars, academics, public policy analysts, non-profit and community organizations.

Additionally, in your recommendations I would like your advice on how any such system could be implemented to support the development of a national standard on collection and best practices for procedures.

Moving beyond the immediate context for this request, I am hopeful you can examine how race and ethnicity-based data collection can be applicable across multiple ministries, including differential impacts and outcomes of government policy on housing, education, policing, poverty reduction, and healthcare.

Along with racialized communities I am also aware that rigorous data collection has been sought after by Indigenous communities. For example, one of the recommendations from the symposium *Planning for Change – Towards a National Inquiry and an Effective National Action Plan* from The National Inquiry on Murders and Disappearances of Indigenous Women and Girls is national data collection strategy. The report notes reliable and comprehensive data is lacking on many facets of Indigenous health and safety.

In our province, I know some work on data collection and Indigenous communities does exist. Specifically regarding the opioid health crisis, the First Nation's Health Authority receives data of how many Status Indians have passed away. This information is disclosed through the Coroner's Service by an agreement with the Province of British Columbia. Recognizing privacy concerns, this information is collected and shared for the purpose of policy development and prevention.

As this work requires thoughtful consideration to ensure privacy and stigmatization issues are carefully addressed as well as the sincere need from racialized communities to move forward with data collection initiatives, I would like to learn the results of your research by **September 1st, 2020.**

Racism has no place in British Columbia. My conversations with multicultural communities have illustrated the emotional and physical toll of racism. Although the legacy of discriminatory legislation still lives with us today, our government is committed to making B.C. more equitable

for everyone. The affects of systemic racism have been disproportionately borne by racialized and marginalized communities for generations. Hopefully, through your work we can develop progressive and rigorous frameworks that can guide future public policy decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John J. Horgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

John Horgan
Premier