



WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 2023
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Human Rights Commissioner to discuss hate inquiry with leaders in Fort St. John

Vancouver B.C. – On Thursday, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, will join decision makers and community leaders in Fort St. John for a conversation about her recently completed Inquiry into hate in the pandemic (the Inquiry).

In March 2023, the final report of the Inquiry, titled "From hate to hope," revealed a dramatic spike in hate incidents across B.C. during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the Fort St. John event, Commissioner Govender will review key findings and recommendations from the report, answer questions and create opportunities for engaged discussion about how communities in the Northeast can and do take an active role in responding to hate.

"As we conducted the Inquiry we heard again and again that there is great power in local communities to address hate," said Commissioner Govender. "Tomorrow's event in Fort St. John will create space for local discussion on how to ensure we are able to prevent and respond to hate, particularly in future states of crisis. I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss how we can move forward together."

The two-hour event is hosted in partnership with Treaty 8 Tribal Association and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Fort St. John.

Quotes

Lilia Hansen, Mayor of Fort St. John

"We are grateful for the opportunity to host the B.C. Human Rights Commissioner in the north as we commit to addressing hate in our community and region. We cannot allow the shadows of ignorance and prejudice to cloud the bright future we envision for our region. Let us come together, united in our diversity, to challenge hatred, promote understanding and build bridges of respect. Together, we can create a Northern B.C. that thrives on inclusivity, acceptance and the celebration of every individual's unique contribution."

Queenie Choo, CEO, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

"In the Hate to Hope report, we learned about the devastating impacts that pandemic-era racism, discrimination and violence are having on our marginalized communities in B.C. Now, it is time to bring residents and community leaders together to discuss steps we can take at the local level to begin to dismantle systems that sustain racism and hate. We're delighted to co-host this BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner event, together with the Treaty 8 Tribal Association, as we work collectively to reduce racism in our communities."

Media contact

Commissioner Govender will be available for interviews, including in-person interviews in Fort St. John, between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 20. To request an interview, please contact Lindsey Bertrand, Senior Communications Advisor, at media@bchumanrights.ca or 604-306-7369.

Media kit

[Visit](#) our media kit for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender and other resources.

About BCOHRC

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring. Learn more at: bchumanrights.ca

About the Commissioner

B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, started her five-year term on Sept. 3, 2019. Since then, our Office has been working swiftly to build a strong team, to listen deeply to the concerns of British Columbians, to deliver education materials on our rights and responsibilities, to issue policy guidance to protect marginalized communities and to lay a human rights-based foundation for our work. As an independent officer of the Legislature, the Commissioner is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level throughout our society.

About the Inquiry into hate in the pandemic

In September 2020, legal changes to B.C.'s *Human Rights Code* gave the Commissioner new broad powers to inquire into matters that would serve to promote or protect human rights in B.C., including through a public inquiry with the ability to report the findings publicly and to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

A public inquiry is an opportunity to delve deeply into the human rights implications of a particular incident or issue, gather factual and expert evidence, hear directly from those impacted (for example, through witness statements, public hearings or surveys) and make recommendations for how to address the human rights issues raised. An inquiry is not a court of law and cannot make legal findings regarding specific incidents of hate.

The Inquiry into hate in the pandemic was the first inquiry conducted by an independent human rights commissioner in B.C. Beginning in August 2021, the Inquiry analyzed data from multiple sources, drew on extensive independent research and heard from thousands of people in B.C. The final report, "From hate to hope," was released in March 2023. Learn more: hateinquiry.bchumanrights.ca

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