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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Letter to school trustees on human rights concerns with the use of School Liaison Officers in B.C. schools

Vancouver B.C. – B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner issued a letter to the BC School Trustees Association recommending that the use of School Liaison Officers (SLOs) in British Columbian schools be ended by all school districts, unless and until they can demonstrate an evidence-based need for them that cannot be met through other services.

In the letter, Commissioner Kasari Govender highlights significant concerns raised by marginalized students, their families and communities about harm caused by police presence in schools. While there is a lack of research in Canada about the impact of SLO programs on Indigenous, Black and other racialized students, American research has found that SLOs contribute to a sense of criminalization and surveillance in schools, especially disadvantaging marginalized students.

"There is an immediate need for research conducted in British Columbia that centres the experience of marginalized students and employs high-quality evaluation strategies," stated Commissioner Govender, further recommending that civilian alternatives to SLOs be explored.

"I strongly recommend that all school districts end the use of SLOs until the impact of these programs can be established empirically." – Kasari Govender, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner

"Out of respect for the rights of our students, I strongly recommend that all school districts end the use of SLOs until the impact of these programs can be established empirically," said Commissioner Kasari Govender.

"For school boards who choose not to take this step, it is incumbent on you to produce independent evidence of a need for SLOs that cannot be met through civilian alternatives and to explain the actions you are taking to address the concerns raised by Indigenous, Black and other marginalized communities," she concluded.

Resources

- [Letter from BC's Human Rights Commissioner to the BC School Trustees Association](#)
- [Report on the state of school liaison programs in Canada](#)
- [Equity is safer: Human rights considerations for policing reform in British Columbia](#)

Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact Charlotte Kingston, Director, Communications, at media@bchumanrights.ca or 1-250-216-4534.

Media kit

[Download](#) our media kit for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender.

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.

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