

24th June 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of REP Here in Canada's proposal to the Welcoming City initiative.

REP Here in Canada (Here Magazine) has long supported members of newcomer and immigrant communities by creating space and opportunities for representation and participation which help newcomers to the Greater Victoria region build belonging and make meaningful connections with the wider community.

The Better Together Gala is one such event and space created by and for newcomers to Canada. In 2020, the Gala hosted 100s of newcomers and immigrants from the region, including a newly resettled refugee family from Ethiopia that I supported in my work and know well. For this family to be welcomed and able to participate in the Gala had a huge impact on their well-being and sense of belonging in Victoria. It was their first social and community event in Victoria, and they were able to meet many community leaders as well as fellow newcomers in a welcoming and inclusive space. This family had never attended an event like the Gala, nor seen performing, literary, and visual artists from so many backgrounds, including Indigenous communities. The family was included in event photos, which were featured in Here Magazine. This was a tremendous point of pride, which they continue to share with their friends and family back home as an indication that they are an important part of their new community.

The REP Here in Canada organization and its programming and events such as the Gala play an integral role in newcomers feeling included and connected in the Greater Victoria region.

Direct involvement of the Anglican Diocese of BC with these immigrant families gives me firsthand knowledge of the undeniable impact events such as the Better Together Gala have in connecting newcomers and building community. I am pleased that as an active member of the Welcoming City Advisory Committee, the city is considering supporting this event to create meaningful change in the City of Victoria.

Sincerely,



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