



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 8 2022**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** September 6 2022
From: Mayor Helps and Councillor Thornton-Joe
Subject: Apology to Chinese-Canadians in Victoria for Systemic Racism and Discrimination

BACKGROUND

On September 5th 2022, the Chair of the Victoria School Board issued a public apology for the actions of the School Board in 1922 when the Board created a policy to segregate Chinese children in a separate school. Instead of accepting this segregation, the children went on strike for a year, and with the support of Chinese organizations in Victoria, BC and across Canada as well as non-Chinese Victorians who gradually began to support their cause, the students defeated the segregation policy and regained the right to attend public schools.

During remarks made at the apology event, it became clear that local organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, labour unions, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and others were in support of the segregation of Chinese students in separate schools. The mayor of the day also publicly supported this segregation policy.

While we don’t know the extent to which the City of Victoria was publicly involved in calling for the segregation of Chinese students in separate schools, we do know a little bit about the racist and discriminatory treatment of Chinese-Canadians by the City in the past. The most well-known example is prohibiting Chinese members of Victoria’s community from swimming at Crystal Pool.

At this point, we don’t know enough about the historical wrongs perpetrated against Chinese Canadians in Victoria for the City to issue a formal apology. Key to issuing a formal public apology is naming the specific wrongs, understanding the impacts of racist and discriminatory policies on those who experienced them, and committing publicly to doing better going forward. The City of Vancouver has done an excellent job of this process; we attach their Council report and the public apology here as background information.

Inspired by the leadership of the School Board and their work together with the Victoria Chinatown Museum Society, we recommend that the next Council undertake a process to understand the wrongs committed by the City and – when the work is finished – to make a formal and public apology.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council request the next Council to include for consideration as part of its strategic planning process developing and delivering an apology for historical wrongs committed by the City of Victoria against Chinese residents of the city.

Respectfully submitted,



Mayor Helps



Councillor Thornton-Joe