

Council Member Motion For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of September 22, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** September 13, 2022

From: Mayor Helps and Councillor Thornton-Joe

Subject: Return of Statue to Sir John A Macdonald Historical Society

BACKGROUND

In August of 2018, City Council voted to remove the statue of Sir John A Macdonald from the front steps of City Hall as an act of reconciliation with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. The statue had been placed there in the 1980s without consultation with the Nations or the public. The statue was removed professionally, carefully and with respect, and has been held in a safe and secure location since that time.

Since the City removed the statue in 2018, the country has entered a new era of reckoning with its history. Canadians are gaining a deeper understanding of our history, including wider spread knowledge of the attempted cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples through the residential school system. This widescale reckoning and new era of reconciliation had its genesis in May 2021 when the 215 gravesites were discovered outside the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

Since last summer, the historical figures responsible for designing the residential school system have come under deeper scrutiny as we learn more about our history as a country. Sir John A Macdonald is one such historical figure.

In the summer of 2022, the Sir John A Macdonald Historical Society reached out to the mayor noting the paradigm shift since the discovery of the Kamloops graves. The Society noted that the statue was unlikely to be repositioned in the city in the near future and that it didn't want the Sir John A Macdonald statue to be a lightning rod for reconciliation. It requested that the City return the statue to the Society. Through conversations with members of the Society, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the City Family (which deferred to the wishes of the Nations), the conditions of return laid out in the attached letter were landed on as being acceptable.

The recommendations to Council laid out below reflect the conditions outlined in the letter from the Society to the City, with the exception of "the City of Victoria" deleted from

condition number two. This is to leave any future deliberations about the statue between the Society and a local First Nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council supports the return of the Sir John A Macdonald Statue to the Sir John A Macdonald Historical Society on the following terms:

- 1. The City of Victoria will deliver the statue and its accompanying plinth to a designated storage facility in Ladner, B.C., with funding from the 2022 contingency budget.
- 2. The Historical Society and the donors will not permit the statue to be displayed anywhere on Vancouver Island B.C. without the expressed approval the local Nation(s) on whose territory the statue would stand.
- 3. Any public statements made by the Society, or the donors would be highly supportive of the reconciliation process. Such statements, if any are required, will be coordinated with Mayor of the City of Victoria and the Esquimalt and Songhees Nation's leadership.
- 4. It is the intention of the Society to safeguard the statue and not seek a place of public display.
- 5. If the Society allows the public display of the statue at some future time it will use its best efforts to include, with the statue, the fullest possible educational and contextual information concerning the individual portrayed, his time, his policies, and their consequences.

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Helps

Councillor Thornton-Joe