

For Immediate Release

March 12, 2021

Asian Canadian Community Groups Call for Focus on Anti-Racism this Asian Heritage Month

March 12/2021/Toronto / To mark the one-year anniversary of the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring COVID-19 a pandemic, the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ) together with Asian Canadian community groups are calling upon the Canadian Government to recognize this year's Asian Heritage Month by focusing on the rise in anti-Asian racism, and the need for more public education and robust data.

"Canada's first response to the global pandemic was racism. Asian Canadians have borne the brunt of unabashed racist attacks across the country," said Amy Go, President (CCNC-SJ). "The lived experiences and reality of Asian Canadians and the communities' resilience in the face of racism has to be profiled in Asian Heritage Month," added Amy Go.

Since the start of the pandemic in Canada, attacks and discrimination against people of Asian descent have drastically increased across the country in direct response to COVID-19. A combination of online hate and disinformation, and economic injustice and uncertainty, has further exacerbated these issues, especially toward those in the community who are more vulnerable to public attacks.

In a recent letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, CCNC-SJ and Asian Canadian community groups are urging the Canadian Government to go beyond the usual cultural, celebratory and informational activities during Asian Heritage Month to ensure that policies, programs, and services are prioritized to address our urgent community needs. In addition, recognizing and acknowledging that Canada has historically discriminated against racialized communities is critical in working towards eliminating racism.

This Asian Heritage Month, we are calling on the Canadian Government to work towards addressing the issues of individual and systemic racism facing our communities through targeted action.

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CCNC-SJ

**CHINESE CANADIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

ccncsj.ca

March 11, 2021

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault
Minister of Canadian Heritage
hon.steven.guilbeault@canada.ca

The Honourable Bardish Chagger
Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth
hon.bardish.chagger@canada.ca

Dear Minister Guilbeault and Minister Chagger:

Asian Heritage Month – May 2021

The Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ) together with Asian Canadian community groups are calling upon the Canadian Government to recognize this year's Asian Heritage Month by focusing on the rise in anti-Asian racism, and the need for more public education and robust data.

We value your leadership and also the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage in our important work to combat the rise of anti-Asian racism during the pandemic. In developing the plans for addressing this year's Asian Heritage Month, we urge you to acknowledge the timeliness and needs of our communities' unique and urgent circumstances.

We appreciate the many cultural celebrations and public education initiatives that are typically linked to the month of May. For this year, in particular, we must go beyond the usual celebratory and informational activities, and ensure that our policies, programs and services are calibrated and targeted to match our communities' needs.

We recently received your Department's online survey to seek input into new campaigns for this year's Asian Heritage Month. While this is a useful tool to encourage broad input, we would urge your Department to engage with our organizations in a deeper way to discuss the priorities and plans for Asian Heritage Month. In alignment with the stated objectives of "Building Awareness and Changing Attitudes" in the National Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-2021, Asian Heritage Month programs should pivot towards promoting an understanding of the reality and lived experiences of Asian Canadians, as well as profiling community resilience in the face of racism.

Furthermore, there should be a profile about Asian Canadians similar to the multi-dimensional profile of the Black Canadian community released in February by Statistics Canada (https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/dai/smr08/2020/smr08_248). As a Government that properly supports using the best available science and evidence, there are important facts about our communities that could be useful to combat misinformation and stereotypes, as well as bring more attention to the issues of individual and systemic racism facing our communities, both related to COVID-19 and otherwise.

We look forward to working with you to maximize the impact and relevancy of this year's Asian Heritage Month. Our shared concerns of course go well beyond this upcoming month. As our communities continue to face the challenges of rising racism related to COVID-19, it is ever more crucial for Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022 to include anti-Asian racism.

Yours sincerely,



Amy Go
President, CCNC-SJ

On behalf of:

Asia Law Society, University of Toronto Faculty of Law
Asian Canadian Women's Association (Ontario)
Asian Law Students Association of Osgoode Hall Law School
Centre for Research-Action on Race Relations (Québec)
Chinese Canadian National Council, Toronto Chapter
Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (Ontario)
Civic Engagement Network (B.C.)
Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (Ontario)
Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association
Groupe d'entraide contre le racisme envers les asiatiques au Québec
Korean Canadian Lawyers Association (Ontario)
Korean Canadian Scholarship Foundation (Ontario)
National Association of Japanese Canadians, Greater Toronto Chapter
Project 1907 (B.C.)
Project PROTECH
Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival

cc: *Marie-Claude Landry*, Chief Commissioner, Canadian Human Rights Commission
Peter Flegel, Executive Director, Anti-Racism Secretariat (Canada)