
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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May 15, 2014

Office of the Premier
Ministry of International Trade
and Ministry Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy
and Multiculturalism

British Columbia legislature officially apologizes to Chinese Canadians for historical wrongs

VICTORIA – Today in the B.C. Legislature, the House unanimously passed the apology motion for historical wrongs against British Columbia’s Chinese Canadian community.

“We can’t undo the actions of the past – but we can acknowledge them, apologize, and learn from them,” said Premier Christy Clark. “Today, we rightly recognize and celebrate cultural diversity – and that’s why all sides of the legislature were able to come together to offer our deepest regrets to members of the Chinese community for historic wrongs.”

The B.C. government was determined that the formal apology be done properly, and that meant working with all parties. The Province appreciates the input and support of all members of the legislative assembly for making today a reality.

The apology motion follows an extensive three-month consultation process led by Teresa Wat, Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism. More than 1,300 people attended a series of seven forums throughout the province between November 2013 and January 2014.

“Today is an important day in our province’s history. Today’s apology is an essential first step towards reconciliation,” said John Horgan, Leader of the Official Opposition. “True reconciliation will not occur immediately, but will take focused, sincere and sustained efforts.”

As part of the formal apology, government released a consultation summary entitled “Chinese Historical Wrongs Consultation Final Report and Recommendations.” The final report lays the foundation for ongoing educational and legacy initiatives, and reflects the broad consensus of participants. Government has accepted all of the report’s recommendations.

The B.C. government believes that a rich multicultural society helps nurture acceptance, understanding and mutual respect. Cultural diversity, increased participation and engagement by all cultures are vitally important to create a strong and vibrant social and economic future for British Columbia.

Learn More:

View the Chinese Historical Wrongs Consultation Final Report and Recommendations:
www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/downloads/Chinese_Consultation.pdf

Learn more about the background of the historical wrongs and the consultation process:
<http://tinyurl.com/q3no2mu>

Embrace BC – Province of B.C. multiculturalism site: www.embracebc.ca

Welcome BC – Information and services for new British Columbians: www.welcomebc.ca

A backgrounder follows.

Media Contact:

Media Relations

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BACKGROUND

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Apology and Legislature Motion

Apology

Today we express our sorrow and regret for historical provincial government practices that were once considered appropriate. While the governments which passed these laws and policies acted in a manner that was lawful at the time, today this racist discrimination is seen by British Columbians – represented by all members of the legislative assembly – as unacceptable and intolerable. We believe this formal apology is required to ensure that closure can be reached on this dark period in our province’s history. The legislative assembly’s apology today signifies our deepest regret for the hardship and suffering our past provincial governments imposed on Chinese Canadians.

The entire Legislative Assembly acknowledges the perseverance of Chinese Canadians that was demonstrated with grace and dignity throughout our history while being oppressed by unfair and discriminatory historical laws.

Moreover, we acknowledge the overwhelming contribution by Chinese Canadians to British Columbia’s culture, history and economic prosperity.

On behalf of the Province of British Columbia, and on behalf of the entire legislative assembly, we sincerely apologize for the provincial government’s historical wrongs. We are sorry for the discriminatory legislation and racist policies enacted by past provincial governments. We will ensure that this never happens again.

Legislature motion

Be it resolved that this Legislature apologizes for more than a hundred laws, regulations, and policies that were imposed by past provincial governments that discriminated against people of Chinese descent since 1871, when British Columbia joined Confederation, to 1947. These laws and policies denied British Columbia’s Chinese communities’ basic human rights, including but not limited to, the right to vote, hold public office, or own property; imposed labour, educational and employment restrictions; subjected them to health and housing segregation, and prevented them from fully participating in society. The House deeply regrets that these Canadians were discriminated against simply because they were of Chinese descent. All members of this House acknowledge that we all aspire to be a fair and just society where people of all nations and cultures are welcomed, accepted and respected.

Be it further resolved that the House acknowledge that the Chinese Canadian Community endured untold hardships and persevered with grace and dignity. We acknowledge that despite

being subjected to discriminatory laws, policies and practices, the Chinese community has made, and continues to make, substantial contributions to the culture, history and economic prosperity in our province.

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