

January 27, 2022

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister:

Re: Online Discrimination and Hate

The prevalence of discrimination and hate online can result in experiences of discrimination within physical library spaces, causing Indigenous people and equity-seeking groups to face barriers in accessing library services and decreasing their feelings of belonging. It is clear that increasing polarization and discriminatory activities online are having physical world consequences.

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) agrees that the need for action to reduce online harms is urgent and that the current legal and policy environment does not adequately protect Indigenous people and equity-seeking groups from discrimination and hate.

VPL is calling on the federal government to undertake further research and broad consultation, as well as advance a full breadth of mechanisms such as education, outreach and awareness, to reduce discrimination and hate. This will ensure that legislative actions towards reducing discrimination and building a more inclusive society, both online and in our public spaces, will be effective. Participation in further consultation would be aided by releasing the submissions received during the government's 2021 consultation.

Legislative actions to reduce online discrimination and hate must ensure that Indigenous peoples and equity-seeking groups are not unintentionally harmed. Diverse communities, including Indigenous people and equity-seeking groups, use online channels for engagement and advocacy. Their rights, and the rights of everyone in Canada, to privacy and expression must be considered and protected. Such rights are compromised in the proposed legislation by obligating platforms to monitor and report communications to law enforcement. It is, therefore, imperative that the government continue broad consultations with Indigenous people and equity-seeking groups on all its actions to reduce discrimination and hate, including legislative changes.

No matter what Canada’s legislation contains, more than law will be needed to address the levels of discrimination and hate experienced by Indigenous people and equity-seeking groups. As observed in the report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights *“Taking Action to End Online Hate”*, mechanisms, such as education, outreach, and awareness, must also be undertaken. As a public library, we agree with the sentiment expressed by Mukhbir Singh, President of the World Sikh Organization, quoted in that report as stating, “hate is born out of ignorance and misunderstanding, and it may be prevented through community engagement and outreach” (p.36).

Libraries are part of the social infrastructure of our communities, and we have a role in building an informed, engaged, and connected community where everyone feels welcome. It is a priority for VPL to foster a connected community by providing opportunities for social interaction, sharing, and informed civic dialogue. We would be pleased to participate in consultations as the government moves forward, and we look forward to continuing to support efforts to reduce discrimination and hate in our communities through our programs, resources, and shared public spaces.

Respectfully,



Kevin Lowe
Chair, VPL Board



Christina de Castell
Chief Librarian & CEO

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Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the x^wməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Online Discrimination and Hate letters were sent to the following Members of Parliament:

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau	MP Alistair MacGregor
MP Bob Zimmer	MP Bonita Zarrillo
MP Brad Vis	Minister Carla Qualtrough
MP Dan Albas	MP Don Davies
MP Ed Fast	MP Elizabeth May
Hon. Erin O'Toole	MP Frank Caputo
MP Gord Johns	Minister Harjit Sajjan
Hon. Hedy Fry	MP Jagmeet Singh
MP Jenny Kwan	MP John Aldag
Minister Jonathan Wilkinson	Minister Joyce Murray
MP Ken Hardie	MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay
MP Laurel Collins	MP Lisa Marie Barron
MP Marc Dalton	MP Mark Strahl
MP Mel Arnold	MP Parm Bains
MP Patrick Weiler	MP Peter Julian
MP Rachel Blaney	MP Randall Garrison
MP Randeep Sarai	MP Richard Cannings
MP Rob Morrison	MP Ron McKinnon
MP Sukh Dhaliwal	MP Tako Van Popta
MP Taleeb Noormohamed	MP Taylor Bachrach
MP Terry Beech	MP Todd Doherty
MP Tracy Gray	MP Wilson Miao