

HALIFAX



MIKE SAVAGE

MAYOR
LE MAIRE
ME'R

1841 Argyle Street
PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 3A5

902.490.4010
1.800.835.6428

mayor@halifax.ca
halifax.ca
@mikesavagehrm

Anti-Black Racism Statement by Mayor Mike Savage Halifax Regional Council, June 9, 2020

I want to take a moment as we begin Council to address the issue of anti-Black racism and the events of the past couple of weeks.

Anti-Black racism includes policies and practices embedded in our institutions that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. It is directed at people of African descent and rooted in their unique history of enslavement and colonization.

To members of the African Nova Scotian community, I am not telling you anything you don't know. For you, Anti-Black racism is not a definition; it is a lived experience.

But racism has been cast into an especially bright public light in recent weeks.

The horrific killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis has ignited a massive protest movement around the world. Among the many sad facts of his death, is that its shocking brutality did not come as a surprise. After all, George Floyd's name joins a litany of Black lives lost at the hands of police.

This time it was captured on camera, clear to all who could bear to watch...George Floyd was murdered in broad daylight.

Last Monday, thousands of Halifax residents - all ages, backgrounds and experiences - took a knee on Spring Garden Road for 8 minutes and 46 seconds: the amount of time George Floyd lay on the asphalt begging for breath with a police officer's knee pressed firmly on his neck.

I was there that evening, as were many of you, in solidarity with community members, particularly African Nova Scotians. I heard the voices of a growing chorus of allies in the fight against racism and lives lost at the hands of police.

Floyd's death feels like a tipping point. Everywhere, there is a feeling that this time must be different.

From Minneapolis to other cities across the US and around the world; to Canada and here in Halifax it is well past time for change. We will be judged, and we will come to judge ourselves, on our actions.

HALIFAX



MIKE SAVAGE

MAYOR
LE MAIRE
ME'R

1841 Argyle Street
PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 3A5

902.490.4010
1.800.835.6428

mayor@halifax.ca
halifax.ca
@mikesavagehrm

Our city and province have their own history of systemic racism, including anti-Black racism.

Race has played a key role in the development of our communities, where people can live, what opportunities and services they are provided, where children have been allowed to go to school and how police have managed our streets.

We have a responsibility to own this history, to acknowledge it and the hurt and injustice it has caused. The responsibility to change it rests with us individually and collectively.

There is a time for protest and for listening. And there is a time for leadership and action.

Our city has taken positive steps. I am grateful for work done by Tracey Jones Grant and her team in the office of Diversity and Inclusion. This includes the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), which was established as part of the Africville settlement a decade ago.

Our Public Safety Office, which you may know is no longer housed inside Halifax Regional Police, has been critical to implementing a safety strategy that relies on a broad approach to building strong, resilient, caring communities for all.

I am proud that Chief Dan Kinsella apologized to the community when Dr. Scott Wortley's work made it abundantly clear that African Nova Scotians were inappropriately targeted for street checks. I am pleased that those practices were ordered stopped and the Chief is leading the response work through a proposed action plan

I am gratified to see greater diversity on the Board of Police Commissioners, the civilian oversight authority for policing in the Halifax Region.

Yes, we've made some progress, but thousands of people would not have gathered on Spring Garden Road, or Grand Parade or Africville in recent days if it were enough. How else can we make a difference?

Through the Police Commission we need to see sustained progress on the Wortley report recommendations of last year. I have spoken with the Councillors who serve on the Commission and I know they share this view.

Police force leadership has worked hard to build one of the most diverse police forces in Canada. This work must continue until we see a broad cross section of

HALIFAX



MIKE SAVAGE

MAYOR
LE MAIRE
ME'R

1841 Argyle Street
PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 3A5

902.490.4010
1.800.835.6428

mayor@halifax.ca
halifax.ca
@mikesavagehrm

our community, including more African Nova Scotians, within the force's highest ranks.

Issues such as police body cameras and the purchase of an armoured police vehicle need to be fully considered. We must ask: Are they needed; will they help or harm; are they in the broad public interest and, are they a reasonable expenditure over other areas of need in this municipality?

This Council will consider these issues today and I trust that everyone around this virtual Chamber will do so with care and compassion.

It has been said, "Don't tell me your vision, show me your budget."

While money is not the key measure of success, this municipality must commit to appropriately resourcing the additional work that is needed to force real change. In Diversity and Inclusion, Public Safety, youth programming, library services, hiring systems, procurement, planning and development – the work of this city should strengthen the fabric of communities and help more people find opportunities. Even as we deal with the financial impacts of COVID, these programs must be reinforced and strengthened.

As we endorse a social lens on our Council decisions now is the time to look at major projects to ensure we are including the voices and the skills of communities that are under-represented. Major projects should highlight African Nova Scotian history and culture, yes, but they should also create economic opportunity for Black people through comprehensive community benefits programs.

Many of us may think we know more than we really do about the experience of African Nova Scotians. Around this Council chamber there is, sadly, only one of us who really does. I want to work to ensure we have more diverse political representation in the future.

I have also spoken to the CAO to ask for a public Council presentation on anti-Black racism in Halifax and Nova Scotian. I believe this will help set an appropriate context as we work to make our shared future better than our imperfect past.

As we deal with the dual crises of COVID and climate change we must also reflect deeply and resolve to actively fight the blight of racism. Our critical eye will look

HALIFAX



MIKE SAVAGE

**MAYOR
LE MAIRE
ME'R**

1841 Argyle Street
PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 3A5

902.490.4010
1.800.835.6428

mayor@halifax.ca
halifax.ca
@mikesavagehrm

to our south and around the world, but our gaze must first focus on racial inequality, injustice and racism here at home.

Thank you.