

## Message from the President of CHC on George Floyd

**From:** Kapell, Brandi **On Behalf Of** Woodgate, Sarah

**Sent:** Friday, June 5, 2020 10:35 AM

**To:** CH Calgary Housing Company

**Subject:** Message from the President/Director

Greetings Colleagues,

Today, I want to take a moment to reflect on the situation that is unfolding in response to the tragic death of George Floyd and touch base with each of you directly to reach out and hear about how you are doing, to provide information on how I am responding to the situation, and to provide direction on how we can respond together as an organization.

Many people around the world have been protesting to call for change. Although most of these protests, like the one downtown yesterday in Calgary are peaceful and focused on solidarity for change, I know some people have turned violent. I do not condone the acts of violence, riots and looting. I do feel strongly that is important to stand up against racism and hate.

Calgary Housing Company is an organization that operates with a focus on providing services that are available to all. Together we welcome and embrace diverse people with an intentional focus on inclusivity and providing strong communities that support everyone to thrive.

The events occurring impact us all in different ways. I am interested in learning how this series of events is impacting you and to hear your thoughts and ideas. The incidents over the past week have left me with a lot of feelings like shock, anger and disappointment, but also hope and resiliency. Like many people that I have discussed this with, I have wondered what I can do to support those who have been victimized and who are speaking out against racism. Even though this is a challenging time for everyone, I see a lot of good going on around us as people band together and are focused on humanity, dignity and equality for all.

During this time, I was recently reminded of a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. *“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”* That is why I feel it is important to speak out and show my support for justice, equity and human rights. If history has taught us anything, it is that the silent are complicit and that we must speak out if we seek to pursue change and to create a better, more just society. I acknowledge my privilege and the many unnamed benefits that I have been given because of my race. I have reflected on how I can constructively participate with a positive contribution to support others who have not had such benefits. I have been reading materials, watching podcasts, elevating and promoting the voice of marginalized people, and reflecting on my own privilege and unconscious bias’. I encourage you all to check in with friends, family members, partners, colleagues and tenants to understand how they have been impacted by systemic racism. I encourage colleagues to learn and understand this matter and consider how you can contribute and be an ally and advocate for those who experienced racial discrimination – colleagues, friends, family and neighbours who are Black, Asian, Indigenous, as persons of colour. I encourage you to be a voice for your own experience of discrimination to create understanding and foster change.

I recognize that some of our employees, tenants, and their families have experienced racism and discrimination here in Calgary Housing and in Calgary. This is **not** okay. If you recall, at the 2019 All

Employee Day, our guest speaker Mark Joseph talked about how each of us, no matter our role, have a part to play in building a better society, building community and being anti-racist. Those words resonate with me now more than ever. The notions of humanity, inclusivity, and respect for diversity is built in our mission statement which aims to make life better for **all** Calgarians through the provision of safe, affordable housing. It is embedded in our vision statement whereby we endeavor every day to support individual and community well-being. During times such as these, it is important to remember our mission and vision statements and why we do the work that we do. It is the role of government and non-profit providers to earn trust with its citizens that we serve. Trust takes time to gain and only seconds to lose. As representatives of public service, it is important that each colleague demonstrate through their actions that they are deserving of the trust bestowed upon us in providing respectful and inclusive services to all citizens.

Colleagues, Calgary Housing stands for inclusion; against racism; for equity and diversity among all peoples, and against hate. All humans- everyone deserves kindness, compassion, respect and opportunity. Colleagues please join me in solidarity. We are stronger together and together, we have a role to play in speaking out against injustice, racism and hate.

I sincerely hope that this focus on racism and discrimination will continue to pull us together as a community, as Calgarians, as a society, and as caring, passionate human beings to create positive action out of this difficult situation. Words can seem like small solace and little comfort at a time like this. However, making a positive impact and a difference in the lives of people is now more important than ever. Be kind, be compassionate, and be strong. I challenge you all to reflect on the situations that have brought us to this opportunity for awareness, to self-reflect, to speak up and to take action. I strongly encourage all of you to educate yourselves on the issues going on around us, to find time to read a book about race, have conversations with those around you about racism, to do an act of kindness, to learn about actions you can take to be part of a fair just society.

For your information, there are two more peaceful protests announced this week in Calgary that are near our downtown office:

1. June 6th, Calgary Courthouse, 1pm
2. June 6th, City Hall, 4pm – Vigil

As a reminder, if you choose to be involved in a local protest please maintain COVID-19 safety guidelines.

I look forward to continuing this conversation with staff into the future through our coffee chats and leaders' meetings. If you want to talk about this, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that". – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Thank you,

Sarah Woodgate

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