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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Attorney General

### **New commissioner to promote and protect human rights**

VICTORIA – The appointment of Kasari Govender as B.C.’s first independent human rights commissioner will mark the start of a new era in human rights protection for British Columbians.

“Ms. Govender brings a wealth of expertise and experience to this role,” said David Eby, Attorney General, noting Govender’s long-standing commitments to equality rights and marginalized people. “She is among Canada’s leading voices on human rights and I am confident her passion and dedication will lead to great success in her work as commissioner.”

A special committee chaired by Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo, unanimously recommended Govender’s appointment to the legislative assembly.

“Committee members were impressed by Ms. Govender’s extensive practice defending human rights, coupled with her reputation as an effective administrative manager,” said Malcolmson. “We especially appreciated her demonstrated commitment to reconciliation and her work advancing women’s rights.”

Govender is a practising lawyer and serves as executive director of the non-profit organization West Coast LEAF (Women’s Legal Education and Action Fund). She has represented equity seekers at all levels of court, including the Supreme Court of Canada. Govender has also co-authored a variety of key reports and articles, and has spoken widely on issues such as violence against women, access to justice, balancing human rights and regulating hate speech. She holds a law degree from the University of Victoria and a master’s degree in international human rights law from the University of Oxford.

“I am delighted with the choice of Ms. Govender as human rights commissioner, and I know she will reflect the extraordinary interest in human rights that British Columbians expressed in our eight-week public engagement in 2017,” said Ravi Kahlon, Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Multiculturalism. “This is a major step towards creating a more inclusive and just society for all British Columbians, and I am proud that we have found such an exceptional advocate to fill the commissioner’s role.”

The human rights commissioner is a non-partisan officer of the legislature responsible for promoting and protecting human rights. The position was established with the adoption of amendments to the Human Rights Code on Nov. 27, 2018. Govender’s appointment is for a term of five years and will take effect on Sept. 3, 2019.

#### **Learn More:**

Province tables human rights commission legislation (news release, Nov. 1, 2018):

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AG0090-002102>

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