Remarks at Official British Columbia Yom HaShoah Commemoration 2021
By Rabbi Dan Moskovitz, Senior Rabbi of Temple Sholom
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Thank you, Premier Horgan, members of our Provincial Government and honoured survivors.

It is heartbreaking for me, that today of all days, while I am here with you commemorating Yom HaShoah and the atrocities committed by the Nazis, the Chabad House Victoria was defaced with antisemitic graffiti at the beginning of the week.

When incidents like this take place, I am always left thinking about the difficult conversations we need to have with our community, and our children. Speaking about the Shoah and antisemitism is never easy. The act of remembering is important, particularly as we move towards a more just and equitable society. To do that requires action against all forms of hate; and to take action we need words and definitions to guide us. In this case, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism is the tool that guides us in our work to combat anti-Jewish sentiments. In the name of the 6 million Jews we memorialize today. On behalf of their decedents here in British Columbia, Jews who encounter increasing anti-Semitism of historic proportions; I want to urge our provincial government to join other jurisdictions in embracing the action that is required to combat both historical and contemporary hatred of Jewish people.

In just a moment I will chant two traditional Jewish memorial prayers adapted for this solemn occasion. The second prayer is a version of the Mourner's Kaddish that includes the names of the death camps where 6 million Jewish people, more than one million of them young children were murdered by the Nazis.

The second prayer, El Mahlay Rachamim is a prayer for the souls of those who were murdered. When we think of the death of a human being we mourn the loss of the body and the soul; but in my work standing with too many grieving families at graveside it is not the body that we miss most; that is merely a vessel for the soul; the part of that person that is unique in all the world; that we fall in love with, and are forever changed by. The soul of another leaves an imprint on our heart.

Today, we remember 6 million murdered Jewish souls, their light that has been extinguished, their dreams unrealized, there loves, and relationships gone forever. We pray that those dear souls are comforted and embraced *tachat confey hasheheyna* / under the wings of God's presence and that they now remembered so publicly will never be forgotten.