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Indo-Canadian organisations Condemn Gurratan Singh's Bill (#177)

Get your priorities right; Gurratan Singh is
wasting taxpayers' dollars

Toronto (18 March 2020): At a time when humankind is facing an unprecedented crisis over COVID-19, and leaders of the world are engaged in finding solutions to a pandemic whose dimensions are growing exponentially by the minute, MPP Gurratan Singh forced the Ontario Legislature to debate his private member's bill that has absolutely no relevance.

Mr. Singh who is a Member of the Ontario Legislature from Brampton East, wants Ontarians to observe the first week of November as Sikh Genocide Week.

A joint statement condemning Gurratan Singh's Bill (#177) was issued by the following Indo-Canadian organisations in Toronto:

- Canada India Foundation
- Indian Institute of Technology – Alumni Canada
- Canada India Global Forum
- Rajasthan Association of North America
- Gujarat Public Affairs Council of Canada
- Telugu Cultural Association of Greater Toronto
- Hindu Federation
- BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha – Toronto
- Vishnu Mandir
- Sanatan Mandir
- Jain Society of Toronto
- Arya Samaj, Mississauga

- Sri Radha Krishan Temple, Scarborough
- Hindu Sabha Trustee Board, Brampton
- PVSC – Srinathji Haveli

The joint statement noted: “We are facing an unparalleled global health catastrophe that has already killed over 7,000 people. When COVID-19 and the economy should be our priorities, Gurratan Singh is wasting taxpayers’ dollars on irrelevant matters.”

The joint statement emphasized that all the organisations who had come together to oppose Gurratan Singh’s bill believed in Canadian values of diversity and pluralism. “In a plural society, it is natural for political ideologies to differ. But all political parties should work to bring people one accord and not divide them.”

Coming down strongly on Gurratan Singh for deliberate misrepresentation of a tragedy for political gains, Anil Shah, Chair, Canada India Foundation said, “The anti-Sikhs rioting in 1984 in the aftermath of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s assassination by her Sikh guards was despicable. Every Indian has condemned it.”

“Indians and people of Indian origin living outside India have worked together to heal the wounds of that tragedy. There is only one way to heal a historical wound – by applying a soothing balm of peace and reconciliation on it, and not be periodically scratching it for petty political gains,” Mr. Satish Thakkar, National Convener, Canada India Foundation, said.

He added, “As Indo-Canadians, we are keen to work with all communities to enhance Ontario’s relations with India to an unprecedented level for the future prosperity of the next generation.”

Pankaj Dave, National Co-Convener, Canada India Foundation, observed, “Premier Doug Ford is reshaping the Canadian economy by turning Ontario into a growth engine for Canada. We at the Foundation are aiding his government in everyway possible to ensure that we as Ontarians continue to grow economically.” He observed that Gurratan Singh’s actions will adversely affect Canada – India bilateral relations.

Ashraf Ali, President of Indian Institute of Technology – Alumni Canada (IITAC) stated that members of IITAC representing the diverse cultures and religions of India strongly condemn the tragic events of 1984 against the Sikh community.

He added that over the last 35 years, the Sikh community in India has become very much a part of the Indian mainstream and is completely

immersed in nation building. “We feel that the proposed bill will not bring peace and harmony to the members of the Indo-Canadian community.”

Vipan Sharma of Canada India Global Forum emphasized that The entire Indo-Canadian community is shocked by Gurratan Singh’s bill, and we are united in opposing it. “These myopic self-appointed leaders of the people are bent upon throttling and extinguishing the peaceful coexistence among Indo-Canadians,”

Mahindra Bhandari, former President of the Rajasthan Association of North America said, “Gurrattan Singh and Canadian politicians who talk of genocide are deliberately misrepresenting the facts. The fact is that Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India from 2004 to 2014, and a practicing Sikh, apologised to the Sikh community for 1984 in the Indian Parliament.”

He asked why these self-professed leaders in Canada can’t accept Dr. Singh’s apology in the Indian Parliament for the 1984 tragedy when they willingly accepted Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s apology for the Komagata Maru incident of 1914 made in the Canadian Parliament.

Surya Bezawada, representative of Telugu Cultural Association of Greater Toronto, said, “It is inconceivable that when the focus should be on improving trade, creating jobs, and utilising taxpayers’ dollars optimally and wisely, Gurratan Singh should be raising a three-decade-old issue that has ceased to be relevant in India and to Indo-Canadians,”

Dhaval Vediya, President, Gujarat Public Affairs Council of Canada, said this motion is hurting emotions of the Indo-Canadian community. “We reject this misguided motion, which is based on a limited understanding of India, its constitutional values, social structure, community, spirit, and rule of law.”

Pandit Roopnath of the Hindu Federation and Ram Mandir of Mississauga said “We have a great responsibility towards the younger generation. We must inculcate the values of peace and harmony in them. The younger generations who don’t have direct experience of the past are susceptible to falling prey to false propaganda.”

Chandrakant Sachdev of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha – Toronto, said, “We believe in the Indian ethos of universal brotherhood. As Indo-Canadians, we should all work towards building trust in each other and eschew contentious politics that drive a wedge between people who have lived peacefully throughout history.”

Dr. Budhendranauth Doobay of Vishnu Mandir, said, “The political leaders have the responsibility of bringing people together, unite them, educate them

about Canadian values of acceptance of differences, and peaceful coexistence.” He said it was unfortunate that some political leaders want to continue festering old wounds.

Hareesh Mehta of the Sanatan Mandir emphasized, “We are all immigrants into a new land, and as immigrants, it is our duty to ingest the values of our adopted homeland of acceptance of multiplicity of identities. In this context, the most important principle is to live in the present, and not let the past affect our attitudes and behaviour.”

Amar Batish, President, Arya Samaj, Mississauga, and Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Scarborough, emphasized that the entire Indo-Canadian community is shocked by Gurratan Singh’s bill, and are united in opposing it. “We should stop all attempts that prevent peaceful coexistence among Indo-Canadians of different religions,” he added.

Kuldeep Gupta, Chairman, Hindu Sabha Trustee Board, Brampton observed that successive Indian governments have provided succour to the victims of the anti-Sikh riots. Over 3,500 rioters have been arrested and of these over 500 have been convicted after due investigations for their role in the violence. “And, let’s not forget that during the Sikh militancy in India, which lasted for nearly two decades, a large number of Hindus were also killed and forced to migrate from Punjab.”

Ajit Someshwar, Chair of the Advisory Board of the Canada India Foundation, said that there are some Canadian political parties claiming to be secular in their approach routinely adopt non-secular positions on public matters, and uphold religious identity as the basis of political mobilization. He added that Gurratan Singh’s Private Member’s Bill will reinforce divisions among Indo-Canadians on religious basis.

Bills like this will adversely affect the economic, cultural, political, and social relations with India. Canada India Foundation condemn this bill as it will freeze all the efforts done by Indo – Canadians to take Canada India relations to a new level.

For more information, contact

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