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Promoting Canada's Multiculturalism

This fall, I had the opportunity to speak in the House as NDP Critic for Multiculturalism and a Private Members' Bill and a Private Members' Motion that are supporting and promoting Canada's diversity.

Bill C-376, *An Act to Designate the Month of April as Sikh Heritage Month*, aims to recognize the important contributions that Sikh Canadians have made and continue to make across Canada. The second reading of the Bill was debated in House of Commons on 19 September 2018, where I was pleased to show my support on behalf of the NDP. Should it pass, it will be the 2nd such Bill to pass in Canada. On 12 December 2013, now NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh passed what was likely

the world's first Sikh Heritage Month Bill, while an Ontario Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). In my speech, I also highlighted the important work of Akali Singh Sikh Society in our community, as well as the tireless efforts of former NDP MP Jasbir Sandhu, and current Minister, the Hon. Jinny Sims, whose advocacy led me to tabling Motion M-35 on 3 February 2016, calling on the government to officially apologize for the 1914 Komagata Maru incident.

Motion M-155, *A Motion to Designate the Month of June as Filipino Heritage Month*, was debated on 1 October 2018 and I again had the pleasure of speaking on behalf the NDP. Canada's Filipino community has been making

immense contributions across Canada for many years. I chose to highlight the hard work and unfair hardships that Filipino women in Canada deal with as caregivers in Canada. Our current caregiver immigration stream unfairly makes caregivers, a very large number of whom are Filipino women, jump through additional hoops to obtain permanent resident status, and they are forcibly separated from their families while they look after ours.

Long application backlogs lead to families being apart for up to a decade. I have been working with the Filipino community across the country on over 100 such applications in the hopes of bringing in a new, fair caregiver stream, and to process these unjustly delayed applications.

Parents/Grandparents Family Reunification

I am pleased to report that after communities from across Canada came together to denounce the idea of family reunification being determined by luck of the draw, the government had no choice but to abandon the parents/grandparents lottery system. It was an honour to bring those concerns to the House of Commons.

With that said, however, I am concerned that the government has decided to go back to a first-come-first-served race in order to get an application in before the application cap is hit. This is almost identical to the system prior to the lottery. While family reunification should not be a matter of chance, it should not be a race either.

During the Standing Committee for Citizenship and Immigration's study of Family Reunification in spring of 2017, I heard loud and clear that Canadians want more access to parent/grandparent reunification. I also heard from experts in Canadian immigration and global migration that this stream provides significant benefits to children, families, communities, and the broader Canadian economy.

Parents and Grandparents from the top source countries of new Canadians are often



significantly younger than our Canadian born grandparents. What that means is that once they arrive, they are often of working age and wish to contribute to the economy in some capacity. For those that are older, an improving global economy means that they are now increasingly likely to have savings, investments, and pensions which they bring to Canada. In many cases, due to the high costs of childcare in Canada, a parent/grandparent in the community can fill this role so that a secondary income earner in the house can return to work.

I will continue to advocate for a parent/grandparent stream that reflects what Canadians want by:

- Eliminating the annual application cap;
- Increasing the annual levels plan space to accommodate the desire of Canadians to be reunited with their loved ones; and,
- Instituting a standard processing time of 12 months for these applications, as this is the standard already in place for spousal sponsorship applications.

Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day and the Nobel Peace Prize for Nadia Murad

On 13 December 2017, the 80th anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre, I made a statement about the Nanjing Massacre in the House of Commons. Subsequently, I called on the Prime Minister to declare December 13 of every year as Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day.

I feel that it is incredibly important for us all to learn about these atrocities so that we can learn from them and redouble our efforts to ensure "never again". The recent genocide against the Yazidis in Iraq shows that the horrible practice of sexual violence as a weapon of war is still a very real and terrifying issue. As such, it is more important than ever that the sexual violence and sex slavery that resulted from the Nanjing Massacre is recognized, understood, and remembered.

During the Nanjing Massacre, an estimated 20,000 to 80,000 Chinese women and girls were raped and some 300,000 people were killed. Several people were found guilty of rape, however, many who should have been tried evaded justice for political reasons. Western eyewitnesses in Nanjing described the atrocities as "Hell on Earth". However, few people know about it as it is not talked about or studied. I myself didn't even learn about it until my late twenties at a Nanjing Massacre photo exhibition.

On 5 October 2018, it was reported that Yazidi genocide survivor Nadia Murad, is to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Herself a victim of unspeakable sexual violence and slavery at the hands of ISIS, Ms. Murad's story has touched the world. She is not just a survivor, but a champion for the Yazidi people and women worldwide who face these dangers. Ms. Murad has appeared before

the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration before to speak of her experiences and her efforts to help her community. I had the honour of meeting with her outside committee as well. Her story is something I will never forget.

Just as I will continue to support Ms. Murad's calls to increase the number of Yazidi survivors of genocide to be resettled in Canada, I will continue to push the government to recognize atrocities of the past. We must recognize these events. We must learn from them. And we must do everything we can to prevent them from happening again.





Victory on Illegal vs Irregular Migrants and the Safe Third Country Agreement

Since January of 2017, I have been outspoken in the House of Commons, in the media, and in the public, on the need for Canada to suspend the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) in light of the Trump administration's continued disregard for international refugee and human rights law.

To name just two issues, the United States will no longer accept an asylum claim on the basis of gender-based violence or gang violence, and there remains hundreds of asylum seeking

children locked in immigration detention centres after being forcibly taken from their parents. On the latter, it remains unclear if some children will ever be reunited with their parents and there are reports these children will be put up for adoption instead. Put simply, the United States is not a safe country for asylum seekers and the experts agree.

I have warned that by failing to provide a long-term, durable solution this situation, the government has opened the door for divisive, anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric to gain a foothold in Canada. I am increasingly disappointed to realize that I was correct. Provincial election results in Ontario and Quebec demonstrate the impact of these sentiments while the federal Conservatives continue to mislead Canadians about what is happening.

One way that the Conservatives have misled Canadians, which the government had failed to address until just recently, was the labelling of these asylum seekers as "illegals" in an attempt to dehumanize and delegitimize individuals coming to Canada to make an asylum claim.

To be clear: It is not illegal to cross into Canada between ports of entry in order to make an asylum claim, so long as you turn yourself over to the authorities immediately. In fact, our laws are explicitly worded to allow this to ensure we abide by the international refugee laws we helped create.

The government, in a failure to lead, flip-flopped between the terms "illegal" and "irregular", contradicting itself and causing confusion. I was pleased to see reports on 4 October 2018 that the government had adjusted the language properly on government websites but unfortunately, the damage it has caused to people's worldviews has already been done; I hope that it is not too late to fix it.

Making National Indigenous Peoples' Day a Statutory Holiday

On 24 September 2018, I had the chance to speak in the House of Commons in support of my colleague MP Georgina Jolibois' (Desenche-Mississippi-Churchill River) Private Members' Bill, Bill C-369. This Bill would mark June 21 of each year – already established as National Indigenous Peoples' Day – a national statutory holiday. This would fulfill Call to Action 80 put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and would provide Canadians from coast to coast a better opportunity to see and engage in the diverse Indigenous cultures of Canada. Instead of just reflecting on past injustices, it will allow for Canadians both Indigenous and non-Indigenous to participate in celebration of the cultures that have continued to this day.

As said in my speech, this would be part of the work required to change the necessity of preserving Indigenous culture from an act of defiance to an act of appreciation, from an act of tightly holding on to one's identity to an act of sharing with others who you are with open arms. It means creating the space of Indigenous cultures in Canada not just to

survive, but also to thrive. That, in my opinion, is what true reconciliation entails. I was proud to see the Bill pass second reading on 26 September 2018 so that it will move to committee for study, though I was incredibly disappointed to see that not one Conservative MP supported this act of

reconciliation. I hope that next year, I will be able to see as many people in our community as possible taking advantage of this new statutory holiday to join in Vancouver-East's Indigenous culture's celebration.



JENNY IN THE COMMUNITY



After 13 years of separation, caregiver Jocelyn Godroy is finally able to reunite with her family, after caring for so many families in different countries. Her courage in speaking out and telling her story was instrumental to the Minister of Immigration's announcement to reduce the processing time for live-in caregiver immigration applications from 4-5 years to 12 months.



On Sept 17, 2018, the Premier of BC announced that the Province of BC is going to work with the City of Vancouver to make a bid for UNESCO World Heritage Site Designation for Vancouver Chinatown and to begin the consultation process to build a Chinese-Canadian museum. This is wonderful news and I will certainly do my part to push the Federal government to be a partner in these excellent initiatives. Also a big thank you to the Premier for the shout out in recognizing me as one of two first Chinese-Canadian MLAs elected to the BC legislature and the first Chinese-Canadian Cabinet Minister.



The "Singing Nannies" is a choir comprised of migrant Filipino women who sing to fundraise for the West Coast Domestic Worker's Association, and to help each alleviate the loneliness of being away from home and separated from families. I will continue working to bring about fairer immigration policies so that families are not broken by unjust policies.



In 1939, Velma Demerson lost her Canadian citizenship when she married a Chinese man. As she was born in Canada, she became stateless, a "Lost Canadian." 75 years later, a government representative, a Conservative Senator and myself, as her MP, made an apology to her for her suffering under those discriminatory laws.



Celebrating with performers, supporters, and organizers of the 2018 Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Festival.



Celebrating Mr. Deng's 100th Birthday at Villa Cathay Care Home. Happy birthday, Mr. Deng and all other residents who celebrated their 100th birthdays! May you celebrate many more birthdays to come.

MOBILE OFFICE

One of my favourite outreach initiatives is my mobile office. Every month I will take my office on the road, bringing it to community events like farmers' markets. This allows me to serve constituents and participate in some of the many wonderful events throughout our Vancouver East community. Please come out and say hi!

NOV

13

Hastings Community Center

Tuesday, 4 - 6 pm
3096 East Hastings Street

DEC

18

Mt Pleasant Community Center

Tuesday, 2 - 4 pm
1 Kingsway Street