



**Deepak Obhrai, MP**  
Calgary East  
Parliamentary Secretary to the  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

# Media Release

**For Immediate Release**

**October 21, 2011**

## **Prime Minister Harper praises Deepak Obhrai's vision that established the National Diwali Celebration**

(Ottawa) Deepak Obhrai, M.P. and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> National Diwali Celebration on Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup> at the Canadian Museum of Civilization across from Parliament Hill.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper joined Deepak and an overflowing crowd of more than 600 people at a glittering ceremony that included Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, Senators, diplomats and Indo Canadians from Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal. More than 20 Hindu temples and community organizations sent representatives to the event, underlying the significance that the South Asian and Indo-Canadian community places on this important event.

Deepak also presented to the Prime Minister a set of stamps specially published by Canada Post to commemorate Diwali. He acknowledged the presence of Canada Post President Deepak Chopra, who was in the audience. These stamps can be ordered through [www.canadapost.ca/diwali](http://www.canadapost.ca/diwali)

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, attending the celebration for the 5<sup>th</sup> time as Prime Minister, praised Deepak's vision and effort that has seen the event grow into a truly national event.

"First off, I'd like to thank the man who had the vision for the first ever Parliament Hill Diwali celebration. And now, after a lot of hard work, 11 years later, it's bigger and better than ever, thanks to Deepak Obhrai," the Prime Minister said.

Deepak, in his speech, recalled the challenges of the past that made him even more determined to establish Diwali as a national celebration in Canada, from attempts to hijack this event by hosting rival Diwali celebrations to offering financial incentives by the then government in power to remove his participation.

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"I am happy to state that the community was steadfast in their support of my dream to make this a national celebration for all," Deepak said.

He also thanked the Prime Minister's support over the years. "I am most thankful to Prime Minister Harper for his unwavering support of this national celebration. His support has kept this dream alive."

Among the dignitaries present were Foreign Minister John Baird; Defence Minister Peter MacKay; Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney; Ministers of State Tim Uppal, Ted Menzies and Bal Gosal; Leader of the Opposition Nycole Turmel and Leader of the Liberal Party Bob Rae.

This year's National Diwali Celebration was organized jointly with the High Commission of India to mark the *Year of India in Canada 2011*, the India Canada Association of the National Capital Region and the Indo Canada Ottawa Business Chamber.

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