



**Honourable Deepak Obhrai, P.C.**  
Member of Parliament  
Calgary Forest Lawn

# Media Release

For Immediate Release

April 8, 2016

## Obhrai expresses concern that Conservative Party may turn into an 'Elitist And White-Only' Club

(April 8, 2016) Calgary Conservative MP Deepak Obhrai is expressing his concerns that new rules the party imposed earlier this year may make the Conservative Party into an “elitist and white-only” club.

Obhrai, the dean of the Conservative caucus, says he is frustrated with the party’s rules that has raised annual membership fee to \$25 — “the highest of any party” — and set the entrance fees for leadership contestants at \$100,000.

In an interview Mr. Obhrai said: “Since we lost power in 2015, I have become very concerned about the direction my party has taken.”

“These actions, in my view, have disenfranchised a vast majority of Canadians. Newcomers, immigrants, low-income Canadians, and those economically challenged who will be turned off and walk away because they can’t afford these high fees.”

“What is concerning me is that, unfortunately, [the Conservatives] will be seen as an elitist and white-only party,” he said.

Since his election in 1997, Obhrai said he’s been working his “butt off” to bring ethnic communities to the party, a job that was subsequently taken on with great fanfare by former cabinet minister Jason Kenney. Success in connecting with ethnic communities culminated in the Tories’ majority election win in 2011, Obhrai said.

But that work has been dropped as a priority for the Conservatives under the leadership of party president John Walsh, Obhrai said. He added that the party has lost touch with grassroots members and pointed out that the caucus was not consulted.

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“This party has become a party that is seen [to be only] for like rich people, I ask why? Why only for those who can afford it? Why the rich?”

“For a family of four, it’s like asking them to give \$100, and then also asking them to give through a credit card, which many don’t have. I have had these problems and my EDA [electoral district association] passed a motion telling the national council that we are unhappy with these rules,” the Calgary MP told HuffPost.

“Plus, when you have to put upfront \$100,000 for a leadership this is sending a message that leadership is restricted to only those who are wealthy.”

In order to expand the Conservatives’ base, Obhrai said the party had opened up its membership to landed immigrants. “But now we are sending the wrong message: sorry, don’t come to us if you don’t have the money. Go to others.

“Other parties are reducing their costs to attract Canadians. And here we are going the other way, and these people hold Conservative values. Most newcomers, low-income, vast majority of Canadians are economically challenged, they will not join our party.”

At the Conservative convention next month, delegates will be electing a new national council, said Obhrai, and he’s asking them to elect individuals who will “change these offensive rules.”

The reason given is that it will stop fraudulent practices.

Obhrai believes there are other ways to combat fraud. The party should invest the resources to call up members and ask them if they have signed their own forms, if there is any doubt, he said.

“All the arguments that they are giving are absolutely nonsense,” he said.

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