



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

# Media Release

For Immediate Release

April 10, 2017

## **We must have justice for victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, but it is not genocide: Deepak Obhrai**

(OTTAWA) Member of Parliament Hon. Deepak Obhrai today expressed deep concern about a motion passed last week in the Ontario Legislature calling the 1984 Sikh riots in India a genocide.

“Motion M-46 is a divisive motion that will only bring disharmony to the Indo-Canadian community,” Mr. Obhrai said.

“Today, there is outrage in the greater Indo Canadian community that a motion was passed by the Ontario Legislature (the only one in the whole world) calling a terrible universally acknowledged criminal tragedy a genocide.

To call this tragic event a genocide only gives political fuel to a Sikh separatist movement that has been around for some time now, and will cause irreparable damage not only between India and Canada, but also within Canada’s own Indo-Canadian communities.

Furthermore, I am deeply disturbed that this motion was passed by only 34 out of 107 MPPs of Ontario legislature and was done so without any research or due diligence. All that any of the MPP’s needed to do was to contact our Global Affairs Canada and these facts would have presented themselves, preventing this misguided outcome.

Therefore I call upon Premier Kathleen Wynne and opposition leaders Patrick Brown and Andrea Horwath to put forth a motion correcting this by amending the Motion saying that *“The 1984 incident was a terrible riot where innocent people lost their lives, and call upon the perpetrators to be brought to justice.”*

During my tenure as Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, this separatist movement made numerous attempts to recognize this situation as a genocide, and I can tell you that the world community, including the United States, collectively believes that while this was

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a terrible event, it does not meet the universal definition of genocide, and to allow the use of this term to be used for a political agenda will set precedence that will harm those communities that are facing real genocide.

The majority of Indo-Canadians agree that this was a terrible tragedy, targeting one community. It is commonly believed this was instigated by a few political leaders but is also commonly acknowledged that the greater Indian community, made up of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists, all rallied together to protect their Sikh neighbors.

I myself can attest to this conduct as my own friend in India, Sohil Chawala, made sure that his Sikh neighbors, employees and friends were safe.

The former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, himself a Sikh, had said that this was a shame on India and on behalf of all Indians apologized. In addition the Supreme Court of India continues to address this issue, as we all want justice to be given to all of the victims.

Finally the recent democratic elections in India show that the Sikh community consider themselves as a part of India. This proves that the labeling of this riot as genocide is nothing more than a political agenda using Canada as the springboard.

This motion has the potential to bring Inter communal divide, and must be avoided at all costs. Sikhs have been an integral part of India since its inception. Sikhs have always been held in high respect in the Indian Society, from Presidents to Prime Ministers to Military Leaders to Soldiers and every other aspect of society; today the Chief Justice of India is a Sikh, J.S Khehar . They have played and are playing an exemplary role.

My own ancestors came from the province of Punjab, a home to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Sikhs will always remain part of my own personal family, political and social mosaic," Mr. Obhrai said.

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