

NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY HON. DEEPAK OBHRAI, PC., MP.  
At the First PIO Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi, India.  
January 9, 2018

Bonjour madame se monsieur, Namaste,

It is a pleasure for me to be among this distinguished gathering of my fellow elected NRIs from around the world. I congratulate the Government of India for organising this event, the first of its kind. I think it is a very worthy initiative.

I'm also pleased to be joined here in Delhi by my Canadian parliamentary colleagues, Bob Saroya, Chandra Arya, and Ramesh Sangha.

I have attained certain milestones in my long political journey.

1. Longest-serving South Asian in the Canadian Parliament.
2. 7 elections and 21 years and still going strong.
3. I am the Dean of the Conservative Party Caucus.
4. Recipient of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas award.
5. First-ever person of colour to run for leadership of the federal Conservative Party. I didn't run to win but to make a point that Canada has changed.

Canada does have a past history of discrimination against minorities and indigenous people. When I first arrived in Canada about 40 years ago, we faced a lot of discrimination. In Canada our political system is based on Primaries, where all party candidates have to be accepted by the party's membership before they can run in a federal election. This is where we face immense barriers. What are these barriers?

1. The APNA factor (we want our person from our ethnic community).
2. Older generation of Canadian s who fear change.
3. Jealousy.

How did I overcome these barriers? By going after what unites us, not after what divides us. Good policies that address the needs of constituents are what unite us. And this why 22 years later I am here, still running strong.

But today's challenges are different. My country is changing. From continued immigration to a younger generation asserting themselves on the political stage. The X Generation and the Millennials, who are now a domineering voter demographic, are making their impact in the political arena.

These two generations do not carry the baggage of the past and they are not bogged down by old prejudices. Today in Canada all the political leaders and most politicians are from this generation.

It is looking at this change, that I opened an on-line portal called "Deepakage.com" to share my 20 plus years of political experience with the younger generation.

As I said at the PBD in Toronto, what has India given to the world? **IT'S PEOPLE!**

People who left India all left with the gift of strong education reinforced by strong ethnic and cultural values.

***You see my friends, all of you are a good example of that. Congratulations to you all and thank you.***

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