

PUNJABI DAILY GALA 2010
Keynote Address
Thursday, July 15, 2010

Remarks by:
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Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. I am delighted to be here to celebrate the anniversary of *Punjabi Daily* and I'm honoured to speak to you about some very important developments in our communities.

We here in this room are from several countries around the world: India, Pakistan, Italy (that's me), Canada, the United States. Canada, as a whole, is made up of over 200 cultures.

Some of us have been here in this country for only a short time as first-generation immigrants. Some have become established here as long-time residents. And some are the children or grandchildren of immigrants.

We can speak several different languages: Punjabi, English, Italian, Hindi and dozens and dozens more.

We are male and female.

We are the entire range of ages: from grandchildren to grandparents.

We have many different customs. Religions. Political views. Occupations. Interests. This is what defines us as individuals. But what defines us as Canadians is much more. Being Canadian is all about all those things we have in common; all the things that drive us to thrive, build and create. It is all our ambitions for ourselves, our children, our communities and future generations – all those things that bind us to the Canadian fabric. It is our shared core Canadian values.

But today we are all here as part of something new.

We all share something new that is very significant in this society.

Something that government, business and advertisers are taking note of.

We are the New Mainstream.

So, what is this rising New Mainstream to which we belong?

For one thing, we are no longer outsiders in Canadian society. In fact, we are Canada's competitive advantage on the world stage.

We are no longer just newcomers with strange foods and exotic dress. Our communities are no longer silos of separate customs to be paraded as colourful spectacles on special occasions.

Of course, we do love our festivals and community celebrations, but part of the joy we express is the celebration of being in the very heart of what it means to be a Canadian today.

We are not a colourful addition to this country's mosaic. We are this country. The new mainstream.

Our languages and cultures are not just tolerated. They are essential elements of what it is to live in Canada. We are this country's link to the world. We are the bridge builders.

We are not merely accommodated within Canada. Our diversity is acclaimed, appreciated and much sought after.

When governments, whether federal, provincial or municipal, or political parties want to reach mainstream Canadians, they are learning they have to speak to us — our diverse communities.

These political representatives [here tonight...eg., Bob Rae, George Smitherman, etc.] are not here because they are courting an exotic little offshoot of the Canadian populace, but because they are participating with you as the Canadian people.

Even businesses and advertisers who seek widespread acceptance of their products and services are learning the addresses of the new mainstream.

And as part of this new mainstream how do we act? How do we contribute? Well, we celebrate our own culture but we also support the diverse cultures of other Canadians — other contributors to the mainstream.

We reject racism. We reject nationalistic chauvinism. We reject ethnocentrism.

With our origins around the world, we have the perspective of global citizens with the good fortune to live in a country that offers so many windows on the world. What a privilege!

We work to build this country we love, without losing our support and concern for those left behind in other countries. People who may someday join us here, people who we may someday do business with; and that is a huge asset for Canada.

And in Canada we must grasp our role in the mainstream and continue to advance our country as an example to the world. We expect no less; we want no less. After all, we chose Canada; Canada did not choose us.

It is not enough to say we are Canadian and to boast about what a wonderful country we live in or to pay lip service to our privileged positions. We must act; and we are prepared to do just that. We do not seek special privileges or recognition – we simply want equal opportunity based on those very same reasons that allowed us entry to Canada in the first place. We want tools to

help ourselves; we do not want handouts. After all, today's immigrant has all of the prerequisites required to contribute side by side with Canadian born. But, if we believe all this to be true, then we must be prepared to act.

My company, Multimedia Nova, along with over 500 newspapers and other media, is acting. We are "Media for the New Mainstream".

Multimedia is the publisher of over 25 newspapers, specialty guides and websites for markets in four different languages. Through partnerships we are engaged with 500 other media operating in 40 languages across Canada.

We came together in these partnerships to unite alongside Mainstream media, to create the kind of mass media Canadian organizations have come to rely on to deliver their messages. To work within a framework understood by Canadians. To finally come out of our individual communities and share and learn from our common experiences to better serve the Canadian market. And to help move our communities forward with the progress of all Canadians.

Our sense of shared community in this new mainstream in Canada has also driven us as publishers to launch some rather non-commercial projects. Earlier this year, we launched a job board "TalentOyster.ca" to deal with the disproportionate underemployment of newcomers to Canada. To create a direct link between employers and job seekers. Did we have to do this? No we didn't; we, as Canadians, felt an obligation to do this because of our links to, and understanding of, the communities and barriers to entries. We did

this because we heard you. We cannot promote “visible minorities” to boardrooms and expect results. We must promote their impressive resumes and the value that “visible minorities” bring to the boardroom. This is the language that smart and progressive employers react to.

But we didn’t stop there: we know that Canadians are one of most socially responsible and giving people in the world. We are proud of our flag, our passports and our citizenship.

In April of this year, for example, we launched *The Canadian Experience*: a year-long series of popular articles on Canadian history written by top historians, under the editorship of Jack Granatstein, to run in print and online publications across the continent. The series is currently in over 65 newspapers, over 40 web sites in over 24 languages.

This series has been hailed as groundbreaking and been praised both by long-established Canadians who are learning the depth of our Canadian heritage for the first time and by newcomers who use the series to study the rich past of their adopted country. It is being read by people in the world who look to us with admiration.

Out of that experience has arisen another new — distinctly Canadian — project.

Many of us new and established Canadians were dismayed to learn that the original constitution of Canada is not to be found in this country.

Unlike almost any other major country with a storied past, we do not have our founding documents on display in our own country for our own citizens to view or study. The Americans have their Declaration of Independence on proud display. The British revere the Magna Carta.

Yet the Constitution Act of 1867, originally called the British North America Act, which first established the Confederation of Canada and which we celebrate every July 1st....

Well, this precious Canadian document — the defining document of our history which offered Canadians the promise of “peace, order and good government”— is stored behind lock and key in a vault in London, England! Our diverse communities have come together to request that this seminal Act be returned to Canada and put on display here.

This will be the final step in the repatriation of the Canadian constitution. But before we ask for the document, we want to hear from Canadians. We want this project to connect and engage Canadians from coast to coast. We want to unite with Canadians from all walks of life in an unprecedented show of democratic process and National pride.

We already have support for the project from leading Canadian figures in government, scholarship and culture and I am happy to report that as of today we also have signatures from the United States, Sweden, Portugal,

France, the Netherlands, Italy, Iran to name but a few, in addition to all the signatures we have received from Canadians.

We consider it essential to consult with and enlist the support of the broad base of Canadians for this initiative of the new mainstream communities.

I urge you to join this great movement by going to the website BringBackTheAct.ca where you can find out more, by reading articles written by Ian Wilson, Canada's former National Archivist and Interim Chair of [BringBackTheAct](http://BringBackTheAct.ca) and we urge you to sign the petition to bring back our constitution and voice your opinion by posting a comment. Information cards are available in this room. Take one and participate online at BringBackTheAct.ca.

In the coming months, you will also see ads and editorials on this project in your print and online publications. Many newspapers across Canada have already picked up on the project.

Naturally, this is to become a project of interest to all Canadians. But in particular, it is a matter of great prestige to us in the diverse communities of Canada. Diverse communities are deeply patriotic and united under the Canadian flag – unfortunately we have not had many opportunities in the past to demonstrate just how committed we are to Canada.

Well, here is an opportunity to do just that. And if you disagree with us on this project; you have an obligation and a right to express your views. There cannot be democracy without the freedom of expression.

My dear friends: we are taking our place in the new mainstream with pride, by reaching out to bring all Canadians together.

We are citizens of the world and we are Canadians. We are the new mainstream and our role is to bring the world to Canada and Canada to the world!

Thank you.