

Canadian Organization for Hindu Heritage Education

Press Release: TDSB CASTE OPPRESSION MOTION



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On behalf of the South Asians who opposed the TDSB Caste Oppression motion, we wish to convey our relief that the original motion that was passed at the Governance and Policy Committee on February 8, 2023, was defeated at the Board meeting on March 8, 2023.

As the grassroots organization that took the lead in opposing this motion, we are deeply grateful to the trustees for listening to our concerns and for putting aside this motion which asked the Director of Education to implement a caste oppression curriculum, training of staff.

Trustee Pei, the only trustee who voted against the motion at the committee level, is applauded for his leadership and asking important questions about why the Board would spend its scarce resources on a problem that does not exist. He also raised the question about the motion being led by outside activists and the exclusion of parent voices and community consultation.

It is disappointing that foreign interference and external activists had full access to TDSB trustees and staff. At the same time many Toronto parents and residents who wrote sincere personal emails and made phone calls were not acknowledged, with the exception of few.

The South Asian community is pained about being projected as bigots or caste oppressors and the lack of media coverage of our viewpoint regarding opposition to the motion. We stand in solidarity against any form of 'caste oppression'; our concern is not whether caste oppression should be addressed, but how. There have been no reports of caste discrimination at TDSB and little evidence of it in the diaspora. This 4-minute video <https://youtu.be/s5PE62IC37g> and petition <https://chng.it/tGTLyyV2rn> explains our concerns.

We express disappointment that without providing any evidence to support the statement, the amended motion states that there is caste oppression in the South Asian and Caribbean community in Toronto. The singling out of these two minority communities, who themselves face racism, as inherently bigoted on the basis of place of origin is deplorable and unjustified. The Human Rights Code specifically states that no one can be discriminated against on the basis of country of origin or ethnicity.

We will be following up with the Human Rights Commission to voice our concerns against this blatant negative stereotyping of South Asians of all faiths leading to prejudice, hate and discrimination. We will assert our right to equal protection under law - the Human Rights Code, the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom.

Best regards,
COHHE Board of Directors