SUBMISSION - RAJ SINGH TOOR, VICE PRESIDENT AND SPOKESPERSON, DESCENDANTS OF THE KOMAGATA MARU SOCIETY

Item 7 of the Report of the Executive Policy Committee dated April 20, 2022, regarding Welcoming Winnipeg - Renaming Singh Trail Park to Komagata Maru Park

I am sending you my written submission and I will speak in the Council meeting Thursday April 28, 2022 at 9:30 AM as well.

Please send my Komagata Maru recognition submission to the Respected Mayor and Councillors and you can also add my submission in the Komagata Maru recognition agenda as well.

Please invite me to the event when City of Winnipeg will unveil the Komagata Maru Park Sign in memory of the Komagata Maru passengers. I would like to attend that Historical event.

Thanks,
Raj Singh Toor
Vice president and Spokesperson
Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society
cell 778 386 0024

My Komagata Maru recognition Submission below,

Hello Respected Mayor and Councillors of the City of Winnipeg,

I support the Renaming Singh Trail Park to Komagata Maru Park in memory of the Komagata Maru passengers who suffered a lot during the tragedy.

My name is Raj Singh Toor. I am the grandson of one of the passengers on the Komagata Maru, and vice president and spokesperson for the non-profit Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society.

I represent the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society, in which there are 15 families all over Canada who are direct descendants of the passengers (children, grandchildren or great grandchildren). The entire South Asian community supports us because we are the ones who suffered in losing loved ones and who deeply shared the pain of our parents, grandparents, or great grandparents being rejected by Canada in 1914.

The Komagata Maru arrived in Vancouver on May 23, 1914 with 376 passengers, including two women and five children. One of the passengers was my grandfather. His name was Baba Puran Singh Janetpura. The passengers were 340 Sikh, 24 Muslim, and 12 Hindu, and all were British subjects. Their British citizenship made them eligible to enter Canada.

The welcome received by the passengers of the Komagata Maru was a cold refusal by the government to allow the ship to dock. No food, water or medication was provided, even though it was the government's discriminatory law that prevented the passengers from disembarking. The local South Asian and First Nations communities provided the passengers with food, water, and medication. Furthermore, this help was limited by the Canadian government because it restricted the Canadian South Asian community from accessing the ship. Often the passengers went for 24 hours without food and water, and sometimes 2 or 3 days, or more. Passengers were getting sick.

On June 23, 1914, Vancouver Mayor Truman Baxter organized an anti-Asian rally, and the first speaker was the prominent politician Federal Minister Harry Stevens. “I have no ill-feeling against people coming from Asia personally,” he told the crowd, “but I reaffirm that the national life of Canada will not permit any large degree of immigration from Asia . . . I intend to stand up absolutely on all occasions on this one great principle—of a **white** country and a **white** British Columbia.”

Komagata Maru passengers were starving, they were thirsty, and they were getting sick. They had a very painful, hard time. The ship was forcefully sent back to India after two months, under the shadow of a military ship as a result of a discriminatory act by the Government of Canada, without allowing the passengers to disembark.

The British were ruling India at that time, and when the Komagata Maru arrived in India, British troops shot at the passengers. Around 20 people were killed on the spot. Many were injured, and the rest of them, including my grandfather, were put in jail for a long period of time.

As a result of this experience, my grandfather, along with most of the other passengers realized that having a British citizenship did not guarantee them fair and equal treatment, so they joined the freedom movement. The Komagata Maru Incident was a very important event leading up to India's independence in 1947. In 1962, my grandfather was recognized by the Punjab, India government for his service and for his active role in the Indian freedom movement. In 1968 my uncle sponsored my grandfather to come to Canada. However, my grandfather refused, saying that he had a painful, bitter memory of Canada. He said that he would not go there, but the South Asian community would go there and would be very successful and live happily and peacefully there. His words came true. Today the South Asian community in Canada is living very successfully, happily, and peacefully

The Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society worked for more than 15 years for apologies from both provincial and federal governments. We never asked for any compensation.

On a request by the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society, the BC Government apologized in 2008, and the Government of Canada apologized in 2016 for this act of discrimination. Both governments committed to learn from the mistakes of the past to ensure they would never be repeated. After I made a request and presentation to city council, the City

of Vancouver apologized for its role in the 1914 Komagata Maru incident in 2020. The next year the City of New Westminster Council apologized for its role in the Komagata Maru incident.

The City Council of Brampton, Ontario officially opened the Komagata Maru Park in memory of the Komagata Maru Passengers in 2019. What made this event special is that even though they are 4300 kilometres away from where the Komagata Maru was detained, the people of Brampton felt it was important to recognize those who were hurt by this incident.

In 2019, in response my request, the Surrey mayor and councillors approved the renaming of 75A Avenue between 120 Street and 121A Street name to "Komagata Maru Way." They also approved the installation of a storyboard at R. A. Nicholson Park, explaining the history of the Komagata Maru. As well, Mayor Doug McCallum and myself unveiled the Komagata Maru Way Street sign 2019. October 2020, the City of Surrey installed a Komagata Maru storyboard at R.A. Nicholson Park.

After I made a request on behalf of the Descendents of the Komagata Maru Society, the Honourable Minister Carla Qualtrough officially announced in 2019 that Harry Stevens' name removed from a federal building in Vancouver.

In response my request , the Delta City Council passed a motion at a 2020 council meeting to recognize the injustice suffered by the passengers of the Komagata Maru. The city installed a Komagata Maru storyboard in the North Delta Social Heart Plaza so that residents may be better informed of the hardships and struggle that the passengers of the Komagata Maru endured.

In 2021, in response my request, the City of New Westminster unanimously passed a motion to recognize the Komagata Maru passengers by renaming the QtoQ Ferry docks name to Komagata Maru Ferry docks and the trail connected to the Queensborough dock name to Komagata Maru trail in memory of the Komagata passengers. Also, the city will be installing an interpretive sign to tell the story of the Komagata Maru and include recognition for members of the community found to have participated in supporting the passengers of the ship.

I support the renaming of Singh Trail Park to Komagata Maru Park in memory of the Komagata Maru passengers. It would be a great tribute to those passengers who suffered a lot during the tragedy. This would be greatly appreciated by descendants of the passengers, and by the South Asian Community in Canada, and every Canadian who believes in treating all humans with dignity and respect.

We can't undo the past but we can move forward and leave a legacy for future generations by educating them about the past.

The South Asian Community is a very important part of Winnipeg, and is one of the fastest growing communities in the city. Renaming Singh Trail Park to Komagata Maru Park will help

educate the community and remind us of Winnipeg's unique and diverse population. We are all richer when we remember how special it is to have so many different ethnic communities living together. I hope that it will help to connect all Canadians with their past to build a more peaceful and tolerant tomorrow.

Thanks,
Raj Singh Toor
Vice President and Spokesperson
Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society