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## **Conservative Minister Attacks Government Support for Multiculturalism and Diversity**

Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney's comments "we don't need the government to promote diversity" are an insult to Canada's multicultural communities and should be withdrawn, Liberal Multiculturalism Critic Dr. Ruby Dhalla said today.

Dr. Dhalla was commenting on remarks made by Minister Kenney at an immigration conference in Alberta on March 19th.

Mr. Kenney's remarks called into question whether the state had any role in promoting diversity just before the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As the Minister responsible for multiculturalism Mr. Kenney's mandate specifically includes the encouragement and promotion of a coordinated approach to the implementation of multiculturalism policy.

These comments seem to be in keeping with long-held Reform, Alliance and Conservative Party policies. The Conservative Interim Policy Document released in February 2004 says, "a Conservative government will uphold the freedom of individuals and families to nurture aspects of culture that are important to them, recognizing that institutionalized multiculturalism as a taxpayer-funded program has run its course."

During the same conference Mr. Kenney also commented that there are too many cases of people becoming Canadian citizens who can't speak either French or English. Dr. Dhalla went on to raise concerns about Mr. Kenney taking such a narrow view of such a complex issue.

"These comments clearly fail to consider the contributions of so many family class immigrants. Why is the Conservative Government abandoning Multiculturalism and forcing Canadians to choose between diversity and integration?, asked Dr. Dhalla.

"Multiculturalism is a pillar of our identity as Canadians. Our nation is a symbol of hope that is strengthened by the hard work, dedication, and vision of Canadians from multicultural communities," said Dr. Dhalla. "The rich multicultural heritage of Canada has contributed to our country's success and cultural diversity. Our multilingual

population is an asset to strengthening ties to countries and potential trading partners around the world”

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