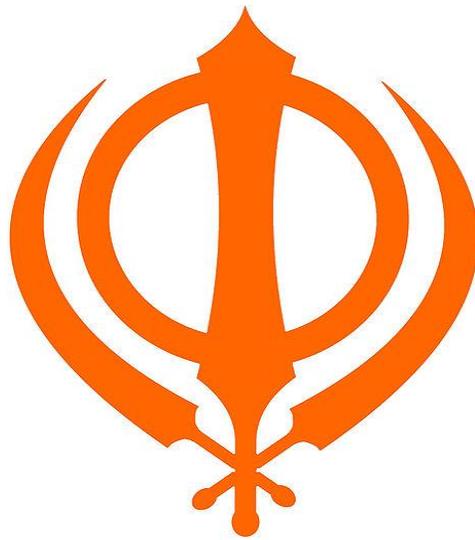


# COALITION OF SIKH ORGANIZATIONS



## SIKH QUESTIONNAIRE – LIBERAL CANDIDATE RESPONSES



## *About*

*The Coalition of Sikh Organizations is an ad hoc grassroots organization, representing the community on issues and concerns, while working towards developing strong ties with the broader community to foster a positive and understanding relationship.*

## *Purpose*

*In light of the recent Ontario Liberal Leadership race, The Coalition of Sikh Organizations has distributed a questionnaire to all seven candidates in the provincial Liberal leadership race. The questionnaire consists of eleven questions addressing the concerns of Sikhs in Ontario.*

*The questionnaire is an opportunity for Sikhs living in Ontario to get a better understanding of where the candidates' views are on the political spectrum. Along with specific Sikh issues, the questionnaire addresses broader issues, such as auto insurance, healthcare, gridlock in Peel and temporary job agencies.*

*All candidates were provided with the questionnaire along with due date and conditions. This kit is a compilation of the answers we received from participating candidates. All candidates were given an opportunity to respond, and their answers have been captured below in the order in which they were received.*



*Meet Your Liberal Candidates*



*Dr. Eric Hoskins*



*Gerard Kennedy*



*Glen Murray*



*Sandra Pupatello*



*Charles Sousa*



*Harinder Takhar*



*Kathleen Wynne*

*Please note: The Coalition of Sikh Organizations doesn't endorse any specific candidate or campaign..*

*The following are the responses to the questionnaire in the order in which they were received*

**1. What level of interaction have you had with the Sikh community in Ontario and what concerns of the Sikh Community have you specifically addressed so far within your public career?**



**Charles Sousa**

I have been privileged to work with and meet dedicated members of the Sikh community as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration as well as the MPP for Mississauga South. I am proud to have visited many of Ontario's Gurdwaras and appreciate our common values of sharing and giving back to society.

Ontario's Sikh community is proud, distinct and an important part of our rich cultural diversity. It's this diverse heritage that helps makes Ontario even stronger.

I will continue to work with my friends in the Sikh community to address issues of concern in the spirit of respect and collaboration.



**Harinder Takhar**

As the first Sikh Cabinet Minister in Ontario I have always enjoyed open relations with members of the greater Sikh community and have always been an advocate:

- I have had the opportunity to address taxi and trucking industry issues and the spreading of human remains in flowing waters on crown lands
- I have announced funding for a Community Centre in Guelph in, a project sponsored by the Sikh Gurdwara there
- I have announced funding for specific community projects in key Sikh Gurdwaras
- I actively assisted in the establishment of the Khalsa Community School
- I was able to facilitate Nagar Kirtan by making special highway accommodations for the procession



**Gerard Kennedy**

As Executive Director of the Daily Bread Food Bank and MPP, Minister of Education, and MP I've worked closely with the Sikh community. Some initiatives include successfully promoting public food drives at Gurdwaras, led advocacy campaigns to include immigrant children into first health care and school services while their parents' status was being finalized, and I supported the wearing of articles of faith in schools.

In 2007 I fought to defend Sikh and Muslim politicians who were being libeled by Prime Minister Harper and the National Post with racist smears about links to terrorism and as MP I supported a variety of human rights issues, including those brought forward by the Sikh-Canadian community.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

As Minister for Citizenship and Immigration, I made it a priority to meet and work with the Sikh community on a variety of issues. In particular, I worked with Sikh community groups to increase funding for community initiatives, language and skills training for newcomers, and help gain access to government decision makers. Since the beginning of my political career, I have engaged and consulted Sikh Ontarians through community meetings and discussions, including those organized by my Sikh colleagues in caucus. I am honoured that my wife, Dr. Samantha Nutt, was recognized in 2010 with a humanitarian award by the Sikh community. I look forward to building upon this commitment to form a stronger partnership for *{answer was cut off at 115 word limit}*



**Kathleen Wynne**

I have had a fairly constant interaction, including the opportunity to visit several Gurdwara's around Ontario and meet with the leadership of the Sikh community. As Minister of Transportation, the turban helmet issue was brought to my attention – it's an issue I continue to understand and research with other jurisdictions. I look forward to continuing to work with not only the Sikh community but all Ontarians to ensure we can move forward together. I have a great relationship with my Peel colleagues who are great advocates for many of your issues and I look forward to working even more closely with them in the future.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**2. Turban-wearing Sikhs in British Columbia and Manitoba, and countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, are exempt from wearing a helmet when riding a motorcycle. However, Sikhs in Ontario have not received this exemption, despite community organizations working with MPPs on this issue. If you become the next Liberal Leader, will you support a motorcycle helmet exemption for turban-wearing Sikhs in Ontario?**



**Charles Sousa**

During this past year I have had the opportunity to meet with many members of the community to discuss Ontario's motorcycle helmet laws.

We need to continue our open dialogue as we work to balance the importance of religious freedom with government's need to secure public safety.

I am confident we will find a solution to this and other issues through our ongoing respectful dialogue and by keeping an open mind.



**Harinder Takhar**

I have encouraged and advised your organization to convince all parties to co-sponsor a joint all party bill to move this issue forward in a meaningful way.



**Gerard Kennedy**

An update on this issue was brought to my attention in a policy document provided by the Canadian Sikh Association and it appears to cover the balance between risks of health cost, safety concerns, and human rights. I feel that Ontario is a great province with accommodations for diversity and a society with a great deal of understanding and compassion for articles of faith such as the Turban.

As Leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario I will work with the Sikh community to find an appropriate way to bring this matter to the House and address the concern of the double standard between provinces.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

It's important that we live in a province that respects and celebrates the diversity of our communities. We should always strive to find reasonable, pragmatic accommodations that respect the religious and cultural traditions of our communities. With respect to motorcycle helmets, I would immediately work with the Sikh community to look at possible solutions that balance religious freedom with safety.



**Kathleen Wynne**

I understand that a number of other jurisdictions in Canada and in other countries have exempted Sikhs from helmet rules. I am committed to further learning from those jurisdictions, especially other Canadian jurisdictions, to discover what led to the policy decisions and also what the results have been since implementation in those jurisdictions. I wish to have a full understanding of all aspects of this issue. I will also rely on my caucus for direction in this matter as well as the opposition and where they stand on this issue.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**3. If you become the leader of the Liberal party, what role do you see the Sikh community playing within the party and how will you encourage and facilitate their involvement?**



**Charles Sousa**

The Ontario Liberal Party is an open and diverse organization within which members of many of Ontario's cultural communities play important roles. I am proud of the significant role that Sikhs play in our party. The community has played and will continue to play a leading role in our party as we renew

The renewal of our party can only be achieved through the engagement of many people.

The active involvement from our youth across our province, from people of all backgrounds and from communities of all faiths is essential as we choose a new direction for our party and our province.



**Harinder Takhar**

All people living in Ontario should enjoy the same privilege to participate in the political process and I will continue to encourage people from all communities to become involved, including the Sikh Community.



**Gerard Kennedy**

The Ontario Liberal Party has been very fortunate to have longstanding and important involvement from the Sikh-Canadian community. Currently there are several prominent Sikh-Canadians who are leading members of the Ontario Liberal Party with whom I have excellent relationships, and I would rely heavily on their advice and leadership. As Leader, I will not take the support of the community for granted and will deepen the engagement of the community at all levels; internships for youths, executive programs for senior staff, community consultations, more independence for local MPs and new ways to gather opinion, get feedback and be accountable. We must fully develop the genuine participation of all diverse communities in the party.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

This campaign has provided me the great opportunity to travel and meet with communities across the province. I've been inspired by the passion and commitment I've seen towards our party and towards making Ontario a better place. For Ontario to be successful, we need the input and participation of Sikh community. This means being respectful and listening closely. Engaging and empowering our membership base to have a more meaningful voice won't just enhance the calibre of our ideas, it will also encourage greater participation.



**Kathleen Wynne**

If I was to have the honour of being leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, I can assure I will continue to listen to the grassroots movement of this party which includes all Ontarians from different walks of life. I am very aware that the Sikh community has a vital role to play in our Party's future and look forward to engaging with them and all Ontarians as we move forward together.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**4. Many Sikhs reside in areas with the highest auto insurance rates in Ontario. What is your opinion regarding auto insurance rates being based on geographic location (postal code) and what steps will you take to change this?**



**Charles Sousa**

Our government is taking important steps to combat rising auto insurance rates. I am committed to examining the issues around auto insurance rates and engaging with industry and consumer representatives on positive reforms.

Recently, the government's Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force has also released its final report. That work will help us crack down on the fraudulent practices that drive up costs for every auto insurance consumer. By taking action against the root causes of expensive claims we will lower costs for all Ontario drivers.



**Harinder Takhar**

I have addressed this issue in my *100 Day Action Plan*. I intend to establish a working group of experts and consumers to debate and review the current methodology for determining auto insurance premiums, which currently place greater emphasis on the community of residence rather than individual driving record.



**Gerard Kennedy**

There have been several major efforts to contend with insurance problems. Apparently the major providers have trouble making money in offering auto insurance profitably in Ontario, owing to the cost of fraud among other factors. However, given the very high costs charged in some areas and to young people and certain use patterns, we are on the verge of making insurance unaffordable to far too many people. I am in favour of re-examining all options including the formation of a public or public-private cooperative that may be more effective at keeping costs under control and which currently works to provide affordable insurance in other parts of the country.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

We need to make sure that auto insurance rates in Ontario are affordable. We know that our recent changes to the system are stabilizing rates, and that auto insurance rates have decreased on average in 2012. The recent government-commissioned report on anti-fraud measures provides guidance on further steps needed to reduce auto insurance rates. As Premier I would work with our partners to explore all options, including examining the impact of geography.



**Kathleen Wynne**

I can tell you that Auto Insurance is something that I will personally be taking a closer look at as it also affects voters in a number of ridings including mine, and I plan to continue the Government's anti-fraud action in the industry as a whole. I do not believe that auto insurance is based on a single stand-alone issue such as geography but I do believe further reform needs to happen within in the system. I believe there is much more to do on this front to ensure that Ontarians continue to get some of the best insurance coverage in Canada.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**5. Many Sikhs live in an area of Southern Ontario that has been chronically underfunded in terms of health care services. There is a per capital shortage of hospital beds, and proposed future funding is not commensurate with the expected future growth. Residents of these areas also suffer a severe lack of access to family doctors, as well as specialists. What plans would you have to increase access to health care for residents in these and other regions of Ontario who face similar issues?**



**Charles Sousa**

Working with Ontarians, our government has made important advances in our health care system. Without question there is more to do. Much of this work will involve addressing the needs of our aging population. Seniors are too often ending up in hospitals when the care they need is better done at home or in a long-term care facility.

To improve services for our aging population, we must focus on ensuring people receive the care they need, where they need it, when they need it.

That's why I will continue to move toward a patient-centred model for health-care delivery as initiated through our Action Plan for Health.



**Harinder Takhar**

All Ontarians should have access to health facilities as and when they need them. This is one reason and this is why it is important to eliminate the deficit as quickly and efficiently as possible to ensure future generations can enjoy universal healthcare like we do. As Chair of the Board of Governors of Credit Valley Hospital I managed to balance the budget during the Harris cutbacks without sacrificing the quality of service and I intend to do the same for Ontario.



**Gerard Kennedy**

Every area of the province deserves to have comparable quality of health services. In fast growing areas where full services are still being built up to match population increases, we have a chance to leapfrog the problems of bed shortages with more modern and appropriate care. This means a mix of increased but lower cost community care for seniors and palliative patients which will free up beds for acute care patients and dramatically reduce times in emergency rooms. Other areas of potential savings to expand care exist in better standards of diagnostics and diverting patients to the appropriate care providers, which will mean better care and savings in costs.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

We've made tremendous gains in health care in the past nine years. To protect the gains we've made and continue to improve our system, transformation is essential. My position on health care is based on experience inside and outside of government, both within the policy arena and on the front lines of health care. We can provide better care for less money by: (i) Investing in preventative care and long-term care; (ii) reducing hospital visits and allowing seniors to stay in their home by expanding home care; and (iii) supporting innovative technology. We need to ensure that these services are available to those who need them, and our transformation needs to reflect demographic pressures and *{answer was cut off at 115 word limit}*



**Kathleen Wynne**

Together, we've made significant improvements to our health care system, but we face a real challenge in the coming years. Right now we spend almost half of the budget on health care. If we sit idly by, those costs will creep out of control. We have to find way to deliver high quality health care while keeping costs down, including areas of high population growth like Peel Region.

My plan includes:

- Begin to extend drug coverage to all OHIP recipients
- Improving patient satisfaction and confidence
- Adult component of the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy
- Ensuring a strong evidence base for health policy
- Aboriginal Health Strategy
- Improve efficiency
- Invest in health promotion



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**6. The Region of Peel is plagued with lack of proper infrastructure planning and development. Peel is both under-serviced by GO Transit and highway infrastructure. Despite this issue, the airport link train which is currently being developed, while sharing the same track as the Georgetown line, will have no stop in Malton and has only a potential stop in Etobicoke North (although stops at Weston and Bloor have been confirmed). What plans do you have to quickly address infrastructure development so it can relieve chronic congestion in the short term and for better long term planning to keep pace with expected continued population growth in these areas?**



**Charles Sousa**

Toronto and the GTA are world-class, but our transit system needs to keep up if we don't want to fall behind.

To retain our international advantage, we need to relieve the gridlock on our streets and in our politics. That's why I am committed to bringing the TTC under the authority of Metrolinx as the next logical step towards regional transit planning. By taking this step we can ensure that transit planning and construction in Toronto and the GTA gets done without politics or municipal boundaries getting in the way.

Transit is a regional concern and I am committed to bringing a regional perspective to transit planning.



**Harinder Takhar**

In my 100 Day Action Plan I have pledged to begin immediate discussions with our municipal leaders to achieve a fully integrated and coordinated GTA transit system within the next five years. I also intend to start identifying efficiencies that can produce a better service result as quickly and efficiently as possible.



**Gerard Kennedy**

We must start by ensuring that communities along the Malton line fully benefit by speeding up the conversion to electric trains which will allow more stops. I will create a single regional co-ordinating body for all types of transportation improvements to bring solutions in the shortest time possible. I will work to bring the federal government to the table for a long term commitment to infrastructure improvement. The measures are critical for our health, family, and the economy.

We must deal with our planning deficiencies and consider creative measures such as tax incentives in high commute areas to encourage the location of employment and for employees who are able to work closer to home.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

We need to move forward with investment in transportation infrastructure, and we need to do it in a way that is separated from partisan politics. We can't afford not to. Gridlock and congestion stifle our economic growth and remove us from precious time we could be spending with our families and loved ones. I will create a 20-year transportation plan that will make Metrolinx's Big Move strategy a reality – ensuring a modern and reliable transportation system for future growth. I will ensure that planning an investment in transit is done at a regional level – through a new Metrolinx – while directing local transit agencies like the TTC to focus on operations and improving customer service.



**Kathleen Wynne**

Peel Region and the entire GTA need smart, efficient transportation and infrastructure that works. That means continuing record McGuinty Liberal investments in infrastructure and transportation. I will champion the prosperity of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area by supporting increased investment in our regional transportation network. I will engage mayors, municipal and community leaders and the public in a conversation about understanding the need to improve our province's complex transportation needs. That includes talking to Ontarians about the services and infrastructure they want and need and how we're going to pay for them. We can't have another 40 years where we lag on transportation.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

## 7. What is your opinion regarding temporary job agencies and the amount of money they take for their commission? Please describe how you will facilitate the creation of permanent new jobs?



### **Charles Sousa**

Creating good paying new jobs is my top priority. After 25 years in the private sector, I know that entrepreneurs, innovators and business-people within our communities and abroad are the real job creators.

The role of government is to put the conditions in place to encourage investment and growth. I will work with municipalities, business and community leaders to ensure we spur economic growth and investment across Ontario.

Regarding temporary job agencies, I know there are ongoing discussions regarding linking their commissions to the wage paid to the worker. I'm interested in examining this issue further.



### **Harinder Takhar**

I have released a Plan to Protect Temporary Workers which includes: Requiring temporary agencies to pay their temporary workers a minimum of 80 percent, in salary, of the fee they are charging the hiring firm. This amount will not be lower than the minimum wage

- Requiring that the number of temporary workers in any establishment cannot exceed 25 percent of the total permanent work force, with exemptions for casual seasonal workers
- Establishing a strict licensing scheme for temporary help agencies in Ontario
- The introduction of a semi-annual “Temporary Help Agency Report” to open the lines of communication between the Ontario Ministry of Labour and temporary placement agencies in Ontario



### **Gerard Kennedy**

I am very concerned about worker exploitation and will establish further regulation including maximum commission, responsibility for guaranteed payment of wages and restrictions on companies cycling through different temporary workers to encourage the development of permanent jobs with benefits. Ontario's greatest asset is its diverse talent base: we must have policies that allow every person to make their maximum contribution to society. Our workforce deserves well-paying, sustainable jobs that add value to our livelihoods and economy. My government will focus on earning more of the high-value jobs created by clusters of innovative firms who are nurturing creative solutions to our Knowledge Economy. I will support our workforce, through improved employment links, training, and education.



### **Dr. Eric Hoskins**

My Prescription for a Healthy Economy is based on a fundamental belief: people are healthy when their society is healthy. They can only build a better future for their children when they are financially secure – when they have hope and opportunity. This is what will facilitate the creation of permanent new jobs. I encourage you to learn more at [www.ericforleader.ca](http://www.ericforleader.ca).

Individuals employed by temporary job agencies are entitled to the same protections as all employees in Ontario under the Employment Standards Act. I would want to ensure that employers are treating such workers fairly and that commissions are reasonable, lawful and transparent. It is our collective responsibility to ensure a safe, accommodating and fair workplace.



**Kathleen Wynne**

I know that my colleague Linda Jeffrey has been looking at this issue over the past year in her capacity as the Minister of Labour and even conducted a 90 day Employment Standards blitz of Temp Help Agencies and that she as well as other leadership contenders have some ideas in this area. I have been speaking to Minister Jeffrey and other leadership candidates, caucus members and Ontarians and believe temporary help agencies deserve further investigation to determine how they can continue to provide temporary assistance to employers but also allow businesses to ensure full time positions are available in the future. This will involve a number of stakeholders.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**8. The Sikh community is an extremely visible minority and often the target of hate crimes. With Ontario having one of the largest Sikh populations in Canada, what steps will you take to protect all minorities against discrimination, violence and racism?**



**Charles Sousa**

There is no place in Ontario for discrimination, violence, racism or other acts of hatred and division. Ontario is an inclusive, diverse province with some of the most generous and welcoming people in the world. I believe in the enduring good spirit of our neighbours and will lead a government and a party that works to embrace the diversity of our people. When necessary, I will work diligently with law enforcement to prosecute those who spread a message of discrimination that runs so contrary to the values of the vast majority of Ontarians.



**Harinder Takhar**

I will instruct the Attorney General's office to give hate crimes utmost priority. There is no room for intolerance against any community within our multi-cultural society.



**Gerard Kennedy**

The vigorous use of hate crime legislation and funds to protect religious sites are just two methods that I would deploy. We must use education to promote culture, and ensure cultural competency in government. Discrimination is an issue that needs to be headed off immediately. I will not tolerate the marginalization of any community in Canada. Minority communities come to Canada and contribute politically, culturally, economically and academically which makes us stronger.

As leader I will cultivate the greater direct involvement of youth of visible minorities and provide them with the opportunity to lead this party forward, with new ideas and new creativity. Active inclusion will keep this party and province moving forward.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

Throughout my career as a human rights activist and an elected representative – I have always spoken out in support of human rights and tolerance, and against discrimination in all its forms. As Ontarians, we must never tolerate the dissemination of hatred. I stand with Ontario’s Sikh community in fighting all forms of intolerance and hate. I’m proud to be part of a government that is committed to fighting discrimination in all its forms. We have, in fact, invested over \$1 million in hate crime prevention initiatives. As Premier, I will continue to be a strong voice and never shy away from speaking out against – and taking action against – hate and intolerance.



**Kathleen Wynne**

I have been and will continue to be a very strong advocate for social justice to ensure that the rights of all Ontarians regardless of race or religion are protected under the Ontario Human Rights code and the Charter of Rights and Freedom. I also know that we need to have further conversations with essential service providers to ensure that they are the best at protecting all Ontarians but that does not mean that we cannot pursue closer relationship with cultural communities to better understand each other to continue to live in the best country in the world.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**9. Provincially, the Ontario NDP has referred to the incidents of November 1984 in India as a Genocide, becoming the first party in Canada to do so. How will you work with Sikhs on the issue of the events of November 1984 with respect to the systemic human rights issues that it represents and providing justice and redress to the victims?**



**Charles Sousa**

I will work actively with the Sikh community and all Ontarians to promote and spread a message of respect for human rights, both here at home and abroad. Working with the federal government, we as Ontarians can encourage other countries to recognize the importance of securing human rights for all.

As premier, I will encourage Ontarians to raise awareness with all levels of government where human rights violations are of concern.



**Harinder Takhar**

As a Canadian who is also Sikh, I was deeply affected by the unfortunate events of 1984. This is a human rights issue and as much as we must work together to ensure such events are never repeated, anywhere, we must also work to educate and create awareness about tragic events like this. As global citizens we have a responsibility to cooperate to ensure basic human rights are protected and those who violate them are prosecuted.



### **Gerard Kennedy**

In a recent letter I stated

*“It is vitally important we continue to remember the victims of the genocidal massacre of Sikhs in 1984 in India, just as it is to foster growing awareness to all human rights contraventions wherever they arise in the world.”*

While there are important distinctions between my position and the NDP, I believe it is important that we must all stand together to uphold human rights. Our relations with India must be based on mutual respect and the reciprocal ability to conduct honest and open dialogue on issues, including human rights and fair treatment of minorities. I have always stood for human rights and will continue to do so.



### **Dr. Eric Hoskins**

The tragic incidents of November 1984 in India represent a failure of humanity and an injustice that must never be forgotten. Sikh's, along with other communities that have faced similar atrocities around the world, must be supported in their efforts to remember and importantly to help us learn from such events so that Ontario and Canada can be on the forefront of advocating for whatever measures are necessary to ensure such events never happen again. That includes seeking accountability, justice and re-dress to the victims.



**Kathleen Wynne**

I have been learning a lot about the events of 1984 and have further learning and research to do on this front but what I can tell you is that I will continue to point out heinous acts of crimes that have been committed in the world regardless of where they have happened. Social justice is very important to me and we all have work to do when it comes to minority rights. I know I have the most knowledgeable caucus and legislature at my disposal. Issues like 1984 are not partisan issues and I look forward to talking to other leaders at Queen's Park.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**10. Notwithstanding that he was indicted by an independent Indian commission on allegations that he was involved in the 1984 Sikh Genocide, in 2010, Indian Politician Kamal Nath visited the Premier and other MPPs. Many Ontarians dealing with trauma and attempting to reconcile the memories of 1984 felt immensely hurt by these actions. What is your view on dealing with foreign politicians like Kamal Nath who demonstrate a lack of respect for human rights and fundamental justice?**



**Charles Sousa**

I believe that a respect for human rights is essential. As a government we must bring a degree of understanding and a level of respect to all that we do. As a sub-national jurisdiction we will always look to the federal government for decisions regarding visits of foreign government representatives. In Ontario, I will ensure our government and our party is one that is guided by the principles of respect and understanding in all we do.



**Harinder Takhar**

There is a need to educate and create awareness among politicians at all levels. We need to be vigilant and raise any and all human rights violation issues through proper diplomatic channels and with the proper authorities.



**Gerard Kennedy**

Sikhs have been in Canada for over 100 years and have contributed to our greater growth and preservation of Heritage. I was not part of the government in 2010 and not privy to the serious deliberations that would have taken place. As a general principle in future, I would ensure that great care would be undertaken to not condone anyone who is currently under investigation for human rights violations and or hate crimes in any country.

I'm aware of the frustration and concern felt by the Sikh community when Kamal Nath was visiting. This is why I feel that communities such as Sikhs must have strengthened lines of communication into the premier's and Leader's office.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

We must always take a strong stand in support of human rights. When dealing with any foreign official, one always needs to take into serious account the views of the community and consult deeply with them to ensure that such interactions will be constructive, meaningful and not damaging (including emotionally) to Ontario communities.



**Kathleen Wynne**

We will have to discuss with other government officials in the future as these countries wish to trade with our province, as it is one of the best ways to grow our Province. However, rest assured that when individuals visit Ontario, we must always discuss human rights issues that affect the people of Ontario. I am a person who is always learning and I do know that we must recognize what has happened in the history of the world in order to avoid repeating tragic events. As you know, we have the most diverse caucus in the legislature and I plan on asking them for their advice on these matters.



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**11. What is your stance on religious accommodation? More specifically, when it comes to the recognition of the Sikh articles of faith, what is your stance on allowing practicing Sikhs to wear the Kirpan in public places such as court rooms and schools?**



**Charles Sousa**

I believe strongly in the right of religious freedom and I respect the decisions of the courts and the Human Rights Tribunal when it comes to the wearing of the Kirpan in public spaces. I encourage the community to continue their commendable work with government and government agencies, including our municipal and provincial law enforcement, to create a deeper understanding of the Sikh articles of faith.

Sikhs have a rich tradition in Ontario and I will work with the community to ensure that this rich culture is shared with all Ontarians.



**Harinder Takhar**

I fully support the rights and freedoms of all religions and will work to ensure these are fully recognized and respected.



**Gerard Kennedy**

Freedom of religious expression is a right guaranteed under the Charter of Rights. Many personal friends practice the Sikh faith and wear the 5 K's with humble sincerity and depth of conviction.

I have always supported the five articles as key to Sikh expression of their faith in Canada. I am open to a human rights amendment that could address this and other religious practices that would lessen the burden to prove what has been established after long and difficult court processes; that there is no compromise to safety and that daily wear Kirpans, for example, serve an important ceremonial purpose. I will continue promote the importance and values of your wonderful faith.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

I have a deep respect and appreciation for religious diversity. Part of this stems from my past career as a physician living abroad. Ontario's diversity is the key to its success and one of the reasons I am so proud to live, work and raise my child here. I was pleased earlier this year when an agreement was reached through the Ontario Human Rights Commission that allows Sikhs to carry Kirpans into Toronto courthouses. It served as an example of how reasonable religious accommodation policies can be achieved – something all levels of government should continually strive to deliver. I believe through meaningful open dialogue we can reach accommodations that work for all Ontarians.



**Kathleen Wynne**

I know the Five K's are essential to the Sikh way of life and I will continue to accept and work on further acceptance in public places. I look forward to meeting with groups like yours and others on the importance of these articles of faith and others and how we as government officials can assist in ensuring the conversations continue to happen



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response

**12. In 115 words or less, is there anything else you would like to share with the Sikh Community of Ontario**



**Charles Sousa**

I would like to personally thank members of the Sikh community, especially the youth, for their countless contributions to our province.

Like many of you, my father came to this province seeking a better life for his family and I am very grateful that Ontario accepted us. He believes, as I do, that our most important task is to leave a better future for our children and grand-children.

To achieve this we must work hard to tackle the challenges that are before us. Because of the work of our government, each of these tasks is easier today than nine years ago - but we must act now to do even better.



**Harinder Takhar**

I would like to thank the Sikh Community for being such passionate and active participants in our society and the public life of Ontario. The Sikh Community has enriched our society on every front and added significantly to the economic well being of Ontario.



**Gerard Kennedy**

I regard myself as a warm friend of the Sikh community who has benefited greatly from personal friendships and the acceptance and support of the community at large. From the first large scale food drives in the 1990s to recent efforts in Parliament I have come to appreciate and admire the community's growing leadership within Canada, often in the face of misunderstanding and even intolerance. The community is intertwined with Canada's success. There are greater days ahead as the next generation takes on greater leadership and engagement as individuals and proud members of the Sikh faith and Canadians. I am genuinely excited by how much more we can accomplish by working even more closely together.



**Dr. Eric Hoskins**

*This answer has not been published as penalty for late submission*



**Kathleen Wynne**

*This answer has not been published as penalty for late submission*



**Glen Murray**

No response



**Sandra Pupatello**

No response