

Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I might caution Honourable Members of the House about drawing parallels between the situation in India respecting Khalistan and other events in the world. I think before they begin to make those statements in the name of their Party, which there is some temptation to do by both my friend from Kamloops-Shuswap and the Hon. Member who introduced the motion, they would want to carefully consider the implications of what they are saying.

Sir, I intend to be as dispassionate as I can be in this debate. I think it would be helpful if I began by reading the letter which the Official Opposition wants to make an issue. The letter was tabled in the House the other day and it states:

"I am writing to you concerning possible invitations to you or members of your government to attend functions organized by members of the Canadian Sikh community. The majority of these invitations are valuable in ensuring that your government is kept informed of developments in the Sikh community and that the community is encouraged to participate fully in Canadian life.

There are, however, three Sikh organizations which exist largely to advocate the creation of an independent Sikh state, known as "Khalistan". These three organizations are the Babbar Khalsa, the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), and the World Sikh Organization. Some members of these organizations have also engaged in or promote violent activities aimed at Indian interests in Canada and elsewhere. The activities of these organizations have been a significant irritant in our relations with India. The government of India has taken particular exception when elected officials attend functions sponsored by these organizations.

I fully understand the dilemma that elected officials face in making decisions as to which functions to attend. In some instances the sponsoring organization may not be readily apparent. Despite these difficulties, I would appreciate your cooperation in avoiding events and activities which could be perceived as supporting the Sikh organizations mentioned above or their objective in the creation of an independent Sikh state.

I would also request that you consider circulating a copy of this letter to members of your Cabinet and caucus. Should you require any additional information on this matter, please contact me."