




CANADA

*NINA GREWAL, M.P.*  
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4 February 2008

David Hermans  


Dear Mr. Hermans:

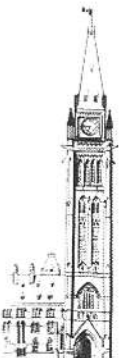
Thank you very much for your recent correspondence regarding the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

In recent weeks I have read news articles expressing concern over the decisions of the Canadian Human Rights Commission and several of its provincial counterparts to proceed with a complaint launched by the Canadian Islamic Congress. The organization alleges that an article Macleans Magazine published last year, excerpted from Mark Steyn's book *America Alone*, "subjects Canadian Muslims to hatred and Islamophobia." In another case, the Alberta Human Rights Commission is considering whether or not to proceed with a complaint over a decision by the *Western Standard* to publish the infamous Danish cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed.

Like you, I am troubled by the decisions of the commissions in these cases and worry over the possible consequences for freedom of speech in Canada.

The federal and provincial governments established human rights commissions in the 1960s and 1970s to investigate complaints of discrimination. In the case of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* sets out the commission's responsibilities. Complaints may relate to employment, or to the provision of goods, services, facilities and accommodation that are customarily available to the general public. Complaints of discrimination may be made based on race, national and ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted. The commission also has a statutory responsibility to foster public understanding and recognition of the principles of the Act.

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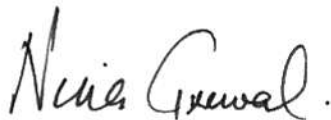


Generally speaking, I believe there is still an important role to be played by human rights commissions. There are, however, areas where reform may be required; specifically the willingness of commissions to consider questions relating to freedom of speech. I am worried that by censoring one kind of expression, it will be easier to start censoring others.

I feel it may be appropriate at this time for the Minister of Justice to undertake a broad review of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* including those sections of the Act dealing with the Human Rights Commission. A fundamental review by Parliament is needed to ensure that the commission remains true to the intentions of Parliamentarians.

Thank you again for writing to me and expressing your views on this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nina Grewal." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nina Grewal  
Member of Parliament  
Fleetwood-Port Kells