

## **Punjabi now third language in Parliament of Canada**

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**Toronto:** Four years after Punjabi became Canada's third most common language, it has now attained the same status in the country's new Parliament after English and French following the election of 20 Punjabi-speaking candidates to the House of Commons.

Twenty-three Member of Parliaments of South Asian-origin were elected to the House of Commons, Parliament of Canada on October 19 parliamentary elections.

Three of them, Chandra Arya - born and raised in India, Gary Anandasangaree - a Tamil and Maryam Monsef - of Afghan origin, do not speak Punjabi, The Hill Times Online reported.

Of the 20 who speak Punjabi, 18 are Liberals and two are Conservatives. Among the newly-elected Punjabi-speaking MPs, 14 are males and six are females. Ontario elected 12, British Columbia four, Alberta three and one is from Quebec.

Prime Minister-designate Justin Trudeau is scheduled to unveil his Cabinet this week and some of these Liberal MPs are expected to be included in the front bench.

"The voice of the Indo-Canadian community will now be very well represented in the Parliament. In the overall aspect of it, the South Asian community won," MP Deepak Obhrai of Conservative Party said.

In an interview with the paper, Navdeep Bains, a Liberal MP, said although 20 Punjabi-speaking MPs have been elected, these MPs represent all constituents regardless of their party affiliation or ethnic origin.

"It speaks to our commitment to diversity and allowing individual [MPs] to play an important role in our political institutions. The main issue to understand is that we have a very clear mandate to execute our platform and we also have a responsibility to represent our constituents, which are very diverse," Bains said.

Iqra Khalid, the Liberal MP who was born in Pakistan, said the diversity of the newly-elected House reflects the true make-up of Canada.

According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, 430,705 Canadians identified Punjabi as their mother tongue, making it the third most common language after English and French.

The 4,30,705 native Punjabi speakers make up about 1.3 per cent of Canada's population. The 20 Punjabi-speaking MPs represent almost six per cent of the House of Commons.

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