



**NATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF CANADIAN MUSLIMS**

Your Voice. Your Future.

June 15, 2015

The Honourable Chris Alexander PC, MP  
Minister of Citizenship & Immigration  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario

**VIA**

**E-MAIL: [chris.alexander@parl.gc.ca](mailto:chris.alexander@parl.gc.ca)  
FAX: 613-996-1289**

Dear Minister Alexander:

**Re: Statements attributed to you by VICE News**

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I write to you on behalf of the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), a prominent Muslim civil liberties & advocacy organization.

On June 10, 2015 it was reported by VICE News that you said the following in response to a question about why the government would not let women who wear the face veil (*niqab*) take the oath of citizenship:

*"The overwhelming majority of Canadians want that rule to continue to apply. We've done a lot in the past year to strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship. People take pride in that. They don't want their co-citizens to be terrorists. They don't want people to become citizens who haven't respected the rules."*

I am writing to express our deep concern that such statements are damaging to Canadian Muslim communities and to advancing mutual respect among Canadians. The NCCM has heard numerous complaints from Canadian Muslims and our fellow citizens about your remarks.

By suggesting that new Canadians are concerned about standing next to a possible terrorist, you unfairly insinuate that women who veil their faces are justifiably suspect. Your statement has been viewed by many as prejudicial and illogical as it erroneously implies that Canada would give citizenship to terrorists in the first place.

P.O. Box 13219, Ottawa, ON, K2K 1X4 tel: 1-866-524-0004 fax: 613-254-9810 email: [info@nccm.ca](mailto:info@nccm.ca)

[www.nccm.ca](http://www.nccm.ca)

Considering the recent release of police-reported [hate crimes data](#) by Statistics Canada showing a 44% increase in reported crimes against Canadian Muslims, our elected leaders have an urgent responsibility to choose their words carefully and to do all they can to bring Canadians together instead of dividing them. The data further shows that Muslims in Canada have the highest number of female victims of hate crimes (47 per cent).

Although Muslim women who choose to wear the *niqab* in Canada are a miniscule minority, it is clear that the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* assures everyone the freedom to practice their faith in our country.

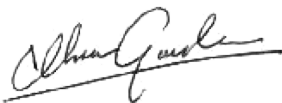
This is not a freedom that is to be selectively bestowed.

Furthermore, women who do observe this practice recognize that there are reasonable limits and willingly remove the veil for legitimate reasons of security and identification – including unveiling prior to the citizenship ceremony for verification purposes.

Your remarks follow a series of disturbing comments made by government officials that unjustly frame Canadian Muslims, their institutions, and their diverse faith practices as “other” and somehow linked to terrorism. We respectfully submit that such divisive political rhetoric which targets minority communities is both un-Canadian and severely damages the trust of communities by perpetuating negative and false stereotypes.

We understand that you have publicly contested the characterization of your above-referenced comments. However, it is critical that you publicly acknowledge the damage caused by mentioning women in *niqab* and terrorism in the same sentence. We urge you to issue a clarification without delay.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ihsaan Gardee', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the signature.

Ihsaan Gardee  
Executive Director