

## Prime Minister expresses solidarity at Aurora Nowruz event



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and area MPs underscored their support for the Iranian community, and particularly women, in Aurora on Saturday afternoon at an event celebrating Nowruz, the Iranian or Persian New Year.

Hosted by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill Leah Taylor Roy at the historic Aurora Armoury, now home to a campus of Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute, it was a time of both celebration and reflection as the celebration of renewal coincided with calls for change.

Speaking before a Haft-sin table which was laden down with seven offerings related to the elements of Fire, Earth, Air, Water, as well as Humans, Animals, and Plants, the Prime Minister said this ancient tradition has withstood "all the upheavals and shifts over the course of history" and it's easy to see why.

"The seven things laid out on a table represent ideas that we all value - good health, prosperity, beauty, patience, abundance, rebirth, spring [and] as we reflect on the past year there are many reasons for hope, and there is also deep hope for change in the world," he said. "The killing of Mahsa Amini resonated around the world, continuing the anger and heartbreak so many Iranians living in Canada and elsewhere have been feeling for many years starting three years ago with the downing of PS 751 - not even starting with that, but as a further example that created such a sense of loss and betrayal by the Iranian administration.

"In Canada and around the world we continue to stand with everyone who is marking and pushing back against this Iranian regime."

Welcoming guests to the Armoury, Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen underscored Nowruz as symbolic of the triumph of good over evil, something that has taken on "an even greater significance" against the backdrop of protests in Iran against "violent crackdowns on and disproportionate use of force against civilians and particularly women and students."

"We firmly condemn the reported violent actions that led to the tragic death of Mahsa Amini and we join in the call for freedom of women, recognizing that freedom for women is freedom for all," said MP Van Bynen.

Added MP Taylor Roy to the assembled audience, "Although you are here in Canada, warmly welcomed to live freely in peace, we know what is happening in your homeland and to your friends and family is affecting you greatly. I remember the words of a woman sitting next to me at a meeting I held recently with a group of Iranian women soon after the killing of Amini and she said, 'We came with our families to Canada for freedom and peace. In Canada we have freedom, but we will not have peace until Iran's free.'"

"The New Year is the opportunity to start anew," she continued. "It's full of hope and as you have cleaned and decluttered your own homes, so too brave Iranians here and around the world are working towards a new beginning in Iran, working to sweep out the

authoritarian regime, declutter by getting rid of terror and restrictions on personal freedoms, and bringing in freedom and piece. Then there will be unbridled celebration.?

Ahead of his remarks, the audience was treated to a performance by an Iranian dancer, a performance which moved the Prime Minister who said he was reminded of the journey his own daughter, Ella-Grace, has found through movement.

?Teenagers are not always good at expressing their emotions in constructive and positive, or even understandable-to-us-parents ways, but when she dances her emotions shine through,? he shared. ?She shares them, she amplifies them, and she just shows a total freedom and openness that I think needs to be in us all. That is not freedom women and girls in Iran have. It's not something here in Canada I think we could ever imagine living without. Nor could we imagine denying education to women and girls like what's happening in Afghanistan.

?In Canada, we know that no matter your gender, your background, who you love, or how you pray, you need to be able to be who you are, have your voice heard, and pursue whatever future you want because, when you do that, not only do you get to achieve your dreams it makes this country, this entire community, so much stronger. It means new small businesses, it means teachers, good ideas, and celebrations like Nowruz today that bring a whole community together in hope, not just for a better new year but a better future for all.

?I want to thank you all for coming together today., I want to thank you for creating this incredibly strong community that has contributed not just so much to this community's wellbeing but to Canada's wellbeing. The strength of the Iranian-Canadian community and the Afghan-Canadian community has brought so much richness to this country; I can only imagine if what is a relatively small number of Iranian communities being able to succeed in Canada so much they've contributed to this country, what Iran will look like in the future when everyone in Iran can live their full freedoms, pursue their full dreams, and actually be free.?

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