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'Punjab Pavilion' Row Comes To Fore Again

By A Special Correspondent

BRAMPTON: Members of Harmony Forum Canada have expressed their concern over the setting up of a Punjab Pavilion again at this year's Carabram Festival in Brampton.

The forum members held a meeting with the Carabram Board last week and pointed out that Punjab, being a province of India, should be participating in the festival as part of the India Pavilion.

Last year, a separate Punjab pavilion, which apparently focused more on the Sikh community and little on composite Punjabi culture, created a controversy which has reached right into the heart of the federal government.

The Carabram Board was represented at the meeting by Chair and President Angela Johnson and her team Joe Pimental (Vice President) and Paul Vicente (Treasurer).

HFC is a non-profit organiza-

tion set up with the objective of promoting harmony amongst the broadbased and diverse Indo-Canadian community and to create awareness and appreciation of vibrant Indian cultures, ethnicity, religions and languages amongst the larger mainstream community.

While appreciating the Carabram Board for organizing the Carabram Festival every year and giving an opportunity for residents of Brampton as well as of



Greater Toronto to appreciate the cultures and tradition of the diaspora from a number of countries, HFC said allowing a Punjab pa-

vilion was an anachronism.

The *Brampton Guardian* had reported last year that South Asian

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau greets members of the crowd during the annual Greek Independence Day Parade in Montreal on Sunday. The Canadian Press/Graham Hughes.

NDP MPs Play Down Tensions With Jagmeet Singh

OTTAWA: Federal NDP MPs are presenting a united front in support of their embattled leader after Jagmeet Singh reversed his decision to punish a veteran parliamentarian for voting in favour of a Conservative motion.

Among them is Ontario MP and former leadership rival Charlie Angus, who publicly chastised Singh for removing Hamilton MP David Christopherson as vice-chair of a powerful House of Commons committee.

Christopherson was removed after supporting a Conservative motion that condemned the Liberal government's new policy forcing groups that apply for funding under the Canada Summer Jobs program to affirm their respect for a woman's right to an abortion.

Angus told *The Canadian Press* on Wednesday that Singh made the right decision in reinstating Christopherson on the procedures and House affairs committee, and that the party will emerge from the controversy stronger than before.

"I'm not in the habit of normally speaking publicly," he added, "but I thought we needed to address this because it was better for caucus unity to get a resolution quickly and we got the resolution."

Angus, who complained on Twitter in January about the party putting too much emphasis on social media rather than talking to the grassroots, also played down any rift between NDP caucus members and Singh.

"Many members of caucus voted for him in the leadership, so

he's got a strong base and we're a pretty solid caucus," he said. "With Dave Christopherson back on track, we can do the business

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Wynne Budget Pumps In Billions; Deficit To Soar

Ontario Will Be Awash In Red Ink For Six Years; Not Pandering Says Sousa

TORONTO: As it braces to fight for re-election this spring, Ontario's Liberal government has rolled out a spending package that targets nearly every demographic while plunging the province back into deficit, with the books expected to stay in the red for six years.

The 2018-2019 budget, tabled Wednesday by Finance Minister Charles Sousa, pumps billions into health care, child care, and support for seniors, though many of the spending promises had been announced by Premier Kathleen Wynne in recent days.

The \$158.5-billion fiscal plan _ the Liberals' election platform for the June vote _ projects the province will run a \$6.7-billion deficit in 2018-2019 and won't return to balance until 2024-2025.

Last year, the government

posted its first balanced budget in a decade, and vowed to stay in the black through 2019-2020, although two fiscal watchdogs _ the province's auditor general and financial accountability officer _ had raised questions about its accounting practices.

Sousa brushed off suggestions the Liberals were pandering for votes, saying the government made a choice to run a deficit in order to provide much-needed support to Ontarians.

"This is not election-cycle decisions that we're making, these are long-term in scope and they're building upon decisions we have been making all along," he said. "The responsibility we as government have is to what happens going forward ... This is about protecting people and ensuring that people are better off."

Asked how voters could trust the Liberals to eliminate the deficit after they reneged on their promise to stay in balance, Sousa said the budget includes "a tremendous amount of prudence" in its projections.

"In the last 40 years, there's been eight balanced budgets ... We are looking at the ability to make those investments over time and we will continue to support the people of Ontario."

The province's move back into the red comes as Ontario's unemployment rate _ at 5.5 per cent _ is the lowest it's been in 20 years. Meanwhile, the provincial debt is projected to be \$325 billion in 2018-2019, and interest payments this year will cost Ontarians \$12.5 billion _ the fourth largest spending item in the budget.

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More Cash For LGBTQ2 Refugee Pilot Project

OTTAWA: The Federal Government has renewed a cost-sharing agreement with Rainbow Refugee Society until March 31, 2020, Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, has announced.

As of April 1, additional funding of \$100,000 will be made available to support refugees sponsored under the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Pilot.

The goal of the pilot is to increase awareness of the unique needs of LGBTQ2 refugees amongst Canadian sponsors, and to strengthen overall sponsorship of this vulnerable group. Through the pilot program, the Govern-

ment of Canada and private sponsors have increased the number of LGBTQ2 refugees Canada has

provided protection to in recent years. The Government will collaborate with Rainbow Refugee

Society and LGBTQ2 stakeholders to increase the resettlement of LGBTQ2 refugees in Canada, along with developing a longer-term strategy to support the resettlement of this vulnerable group.

Hussen said: "Our commitment to providing protection to the world's most vulnerable people is fundamental to our identity as Canadians, and I'm proud of what we have been able to accomplish through the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Pilot Program.

"LGBTQ2 refugees face unique settlement and integration challenges. Our Government is com

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