

Calgary MP works to stop deportation of convicted truck driver in deadly Humboldt Broncos crash

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George Chahal in the Skyview Ranch community in Calgary, 2021.

JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A Liberal member of Parliament is working behind the scenes to drum up support from his caucus colleagues to halt the deportation of the truck driver convicted in the deadly [2018 Humboldt Broncos bus crash](#) that killed 16 people.

George Chahal, who represents Calgary Skyview, sent an e-mail to all Liberal MPs last week calling on his colleagues to join him in standing up for Jaskirat Singh Sidhu, who on May 24 was [issued a deportation order back to India](#). Mr. Chahal said, in an interview, that he feels it is his moral obligation to help Mr. Sidhu and his family, who are his constituents.

“What will the deportation accomplish? Will it make any Canadian safer? Will it make Canada a better place to live? And the answer is, it will not. He has served his time. He is remorseful. He has asked for forgiveness,” Mr. Chahal said on Tuesday. “I don’t think it serves Canada to punish him further and to separate a wife from her spouse and a child from their father.”

In April, 2018, Mr. Sidhu, a rookie truck driver, blew through a stop sign before crashing into a bus carrying players and staff of the Humboldt Broncos

junior hockey team at a rural intersection near Tisdale, Sask. Sixteen people were killed and another 13 were injured, which led to an outpouring of grief across the country and throughout the hockey world.

A year later, Mr. Sidhu was sentenced to eight years after [pleading guilty](#) to 16 counts of dangerous driving causing death and 13 counts of dangerous driving causing bodily harm. He was granted full parole last year.

Mr. Chahal declined to provide a copy of the e-mail he sent to his colleagues, first reported on by The Hill Times, to The Globe and Mail because he said the correspondence was confidential. It was reported that Mr. Chahal wrote that it is unlikely the federal government will intervene, though he has not yet been given a definitive no.

A spokesperson for Immigration Minister Marc Miller said he could not comment on specific cases because of privacy legislation.

Mr. Chahal said, as a father of three, it is an “unbearable thought” to lose a child and he understands the grief felt by the families affected by the Humboldt tragedy. He is asking his colleagues to also look at the harm that could come to Mr. Sidhu and his family if he is deported.

Mr. Sidhu’s wife, a registered nurse, is currently the sole provider for the family while their son receives neonatal care for severe heart and lung-related issues. She has to consider whether to stay in Canada and raise their son alone or return to India where health care for their child may not be at the same level, said Mr. Chahal.

“I’ve seen both sides. Some folks believe he should be deported but I’ve overwhelmingly seen tremendous compassion and forgiveness from the people who have reached out to me,” he said. “So, I’m hoping to embark on lending my voice to support Mr. Sidhu and his family in the days and weeks ahead.”

Families of Humboldt crash victims have been divided in their viewpoints on Mr. Sidhu’s deportation. Some have said the order came as a relief and amounted to justice served while others have forgiven Mr. Sidhu and even advocated for him to stay in Canada.

Michael Greene, the lawyer representing Mr. Sidhu, said last month that he is planning to file an application asking the government to return his client’s permanent resident status on humanitarian grounds.

During this process, Mr. Greene said immigration officials would review Mr. Sidhu's offence, his remorse, determine whether he is a security risk or danger to the public and consider other factors, such as the best interests of any child involved.

Mr. Greene did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It could be months and even years before Mr. Sidhu faces deportation. He moved to Canada from India in 2014.

With a file from The Canadian Press

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-calgary-mp-works-to-stop-deportation-of-convicted-truck-driver-in/>

Good for Mr. Chatal for stepping up and putting himself out there on this. It might help him to know that he has the support of a "cranky" old senior from rural Saskatchewan.

If anyone should be deported, it should be the people who put Mr. Sidhu behind the wheel of that huge truck in such circumstances. That region might seem safer than the QE2, but in reality it is not for someone from Mr. Sidhu's background. He would have been safer driving down the Trans Canada like so many other immigrant truck drivers. He simply trusted his masters that they knew what they were doing, and that he was only doing what thousands of others had done before him. It was very easy to get distracted by all that was going on with that ungainly double-trailer load of peat moss he was carrying and blow through a stop sign. The fact that there are so few on such a road makes it easier to creep accelerating and harder to be watchful for them.

Mr. Sidhu has shown sincere remorse—that he knows the enormity and gravity of the horrific tragedy in which he played a central role—conducting himself as well as anyone could, and his exceptional wife has stuck by him. He will pay penance for this moment of negligence for the rest of his life, and he might as well do it here doing something constructive with his life for the sake of his wife and child, maybe finding a way to quietly give back to this country. In the equation of punishment that matters to some aggrieved people, because of the notoriety, he will suffer more here, known as "that guy who killed all those kids," than he would in India. Sikhs may prove unfathomable for mainstream Canadians, and seem stiff and hard-hearted, but they have a serious, sophisticated, and demanding ethical current in their social-religious way of life. They come from a tense place (India, Pakistan, the Punjab) teeming with rivalry and tension, and the unease and mistrust they encounter here must make it hard for them to feel secure and comfortable with us. Thereby the misunderstanding(s) and prejudice(s) become entrenched.

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