



CANADA

# Debates of the Senate

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3rd SESSION

• 40th PARLIAMENT

• VOLUME 147

• NUMBER 69

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## RACIAL STEREOTYPING BY THE MEDIA

Statement by:

The Honourable Vivienne Poy

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

## THE SENATE

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### RACIAL STEREOTYPING BY THE MEDIA

**Hon. Vivienne Poy:** Honourable senators, on November 10, 2010, *Maclean's* magazine posed the question "Too Asian?" The headline was in reference to Canada's top universities. Another article in the *Toronto Star* entitled: "Asian students suffering for success" urged Asian parents to stop pushing their children into university.

The term "Asian" was used to describe students who look Asian at the University of Toronto, University of British Columbia and Waterloo University. Besides international students, are the majority of them not Canadians? In response, the Chinese Canadian National Council stated that the articles are "fear mongering" and stoke an "us versus them" mentality.

*Maclean's* implies that "white" students who prefer to drink and party cannot compete for the spots at our universities because "Asian" students work too hard. This view implies that Caucasian students are too lazy to study but university acceptance remains an entitlement. Students who happen to look Asian are "the other," whose numbers should be lower because our top universities accept too many.

Caucasian parents and students should be upset by this negative portrayal.

My question is, who is a Canadian? What do Canadians look like? All we need to do is look around our large cities and we see faces from all over the world. Most of them are Canadians, and entitled to enter our universities based on merit.

Canada needs students who are committed to learning, entrepreneurship and innovation, which are the keys to our future success. This situation is evident from the University of Toronto's status as the top research university for the past three years and one of the best in the world.

It is retrogressive to suggest that those who look "Asian" are not welcome on our campuses. Since when is hard work and being studious a problem in human society?

"Disgracefully xenophobic" is how Jeet Heer from York University described the *Maclean's* article in the *National Post* on November 15. He compared it in every detail to what A. Lawrence Lowell, President of Harvard University, wrote about the student body being "too Jewish" in the 1920s. Just imagine the response to *Maclean's* if that had been the headline.

• (1350)

President David Naylor of the University of Toronto said:

We've never had a student complain. . . . Asian students are fully engaged in extracurricular activities. So the whole concept is false.

Mei-Ling Chen, a recent graduate of the University of Toronto, said that the article's wording is just another form of bullying.

Honourable senators, please join me in rejecting such a blatant attempt to create divisions in Canadian society.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear!

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