

## **Speech by Senator Vivienne Poy**

### **Federation of Pakistani Canadians**

**Friday, November 5, 1999**

Honourable Benazir Bhutto, President Saleen Janjua, Honoured Guests,

Thank you for inviting me to participate in your symposium on “Human Rights in the New Millennium”. Knowing very little about Pakistan and the Pakistani people, I look forward to learning from you this evening.

The little that I know is from feminist discourses on Pakistani women. I hope this subject will be touched on in your programme.

The Federation of Pakistani Canadians has been working hard to promote racial harmony, settlement and integration in the Pakistani community. As a Chinese Canadian and our country’s first Senator of Asian descent, I am very familiar with the importance of community support for new immigrants settling in this country.

Human rights have no political borders. They cannot be culturally defined and must be upheld without regard to a person’s gender, age or racial background. When Canadians talk about human rights, it is often in reference to other countries, especially the countries of the developing world. I believe we also need to work hard here at home to ensure that human rights are upheld in Canada. As Asian Canadians, many of us will be personally familiar with discrimination or know people who have struggled against prejudice. Our awareness of the problems, and willingness to work towards eliminating discriminatory attitudes, will ensure that we, as members of the world community, will have the right to human dignity.

As a Canadian Senator, I fully support all efforts to promote human rights domestically and internationally. I commend the Federation of Pakistani Canadians for its positive contribution towards this goal in organizing tonight’s symposium on human rights. I look forward to hearing your speakers. Thank you.