

January 30, 2014

I attended the forum in Richmond on January 27 and I believe that you wanted to “hear my thoughts”. I won’t repeat much of the many good ideas that you heard but I offer the following:

There are various groups of people with various levels of interest in the treatment of the Canadian Chinese immigrants from the early 1900’s. Some have no interest, some think there should be no apology-just leave the past alone, some are offended by the treatment and believe education and reconciliation is necessary while others are descendants of the Head Tax (ht) payers and think compensation is still required. My father immigrated in 1921 and paid the Head Tax so I fall into the last group.

I liken my opinion to someone who has had their wallet taken. Imagine that video surveillance shows the culprit to have stuffed my wallet into his bag and by some fortune the culprit seeks me out and apologizes with my wallet still in his bag-this is a pretty hollow apology; now imagine this same culprit comes to me and not only apologizes but offers my id, credit cards, and photos, in addition the culprit only offers a few dollars from what was originally in my wallet stating that although sorry this is all the money is left. This situation although unfortunate is much more compensating to my loss. The people formulating an apology must consider this.

I do understand that full monetary compensation is difficult for the government but how about some innovative thinking. The government could consider giving annual tax credits/deductions federally and provincially to descendants of the Head Tax payers. Not only does this address compensation but it creates a legacy of education: every Canadian will complete their income tax at some time. At such time, when a Head Tax deduction is offered, the tax payer will ask how and under what circumstances they could qualify for the Head Tax deduction-education for years to come for all. Not too complicated and I know that I would be satisfied.

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