CEREMONY CELEBRATES 40 NEW CITIZENS IN THE MOST 'CANADIAN' WAY

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Mohammad Inamullah was feeling superb.

He — along with wife Amna Sharif and three children — was among the 40 new Canadians from over 20 countries who were sworn in at a community citizenship ceremony held by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) on Tuesday, June 4, at Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area in Milton.

"It's the day that we've been waiting for," Inamullah said.

The couple came to Canada from Pakistan more than six years ago to seek a better future for their children, citing a deterioration in the law and order situation there as the reason to leave.

"It was a very tough journey," said Sharif, explaining that they didn't have any relatives or know anyone prior to arriving. "When we came here, we struggled to get basic jobs to meet our basic needs."

Their determination and hard work paid off as they now lead a more comfortable life.

Inamullah said he's looking forward to casting his vote in the upcoming federal election for the first time and continuing his contribution to "make Canada better."

Albert Wong, the presiding citizenship judge, said new citizens bring so much to the country.

"They're our future," said Wong, noting that there were 30,000 new Canadians sworn in across the GTA in the past six months. And for this particular ceremony to take place in a park that offers such a beautiful scenery with a chance to go on a hike after, he said it "can't get more Canadian than this."

Bambang Sadewo/Torstar

The community citizenship ceremony was held on Tuesday, June 4, at Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area in Milton.

He added the way the country embraces diversity is a beacon to the world. He reminded the new citizens of their many responsibilities, including to actively seek out opportunities to help others in the community. Earlier in the day, cheers erupted after the group took their oath of citizenship in French and English.

Presiding officials and guest speakers — including Conservation Halton chief administrative officer Hassaan Basit, elder Valerie King from Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation, Ojibwe dancer Matthew Rutledge, Indigenous entrepreneur Jenn Harper, and the ICC's operations lead Amy Matchen — congratulated them as they collect their citizenship certificates. Helping close the ceremony by leading the singing of Canadian national anthem — O Canada — was the Milton Choristers.

Choir member John Carroll, who took part in an earlier roundtable discussion with the new Canadians to share each other's experiences, was humbled by the stories he heard and glad that they have chosen Canada as their homes.

"People have opportunities here to be educated, to grow, to participate in the arts, to be in relationships that aren't questioned or rejected on the basis of colour, race, creed, sexual orientation," Carroll said.

It also gives him more appreciation to some of the things that he might have taken for granted on a daily basis.

"I feel warm and I feel very good about having participated (in the ceremony)," he said.

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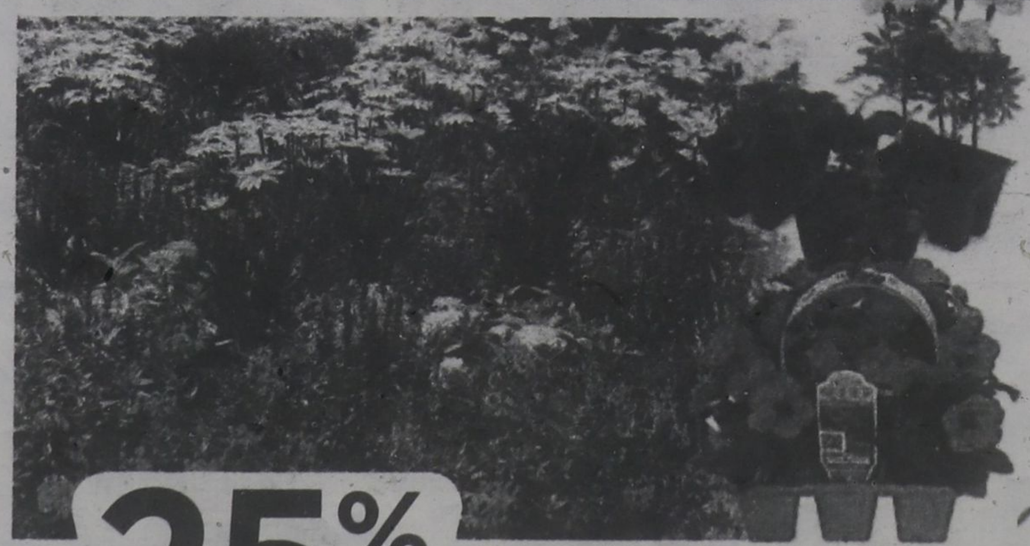

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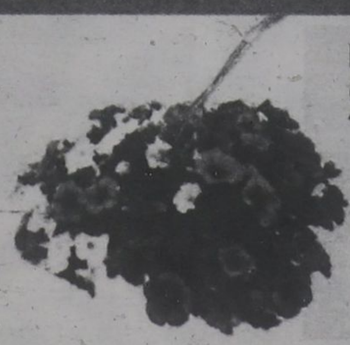

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