

## **Senators Statements**

### **On the Occasion of the Swearing-In of the Honourable Senator Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia**

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Honourable colleagues, with a tip of the hat to Senator Fabian Manning, I am pleased to present a special chapter of “Telling our Story”:

This is the story of a man who was born in Rhodesia, and – aspiring to overcome the prejudice that he faced in that country – came to Canada to start a new life. He found his way to Newfoundland in 1984, fell in love with the province, and settled in Twillingate, which is a town of about 2500 people on an island in Notre Dame Bay. He became a family doctor, community leader, senior medical officer, professor of medicine, and staunch advocate of rural health – in particular for marginalized peoples. Along the way, he earned the Order of Canada and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal, and was named Canadian Family Physician of the Year.

This man is none other than our new colleague, the Honourable Senator Mohamed Iqbal Ravalia, who was named to the Upper Chamber on June 1, 2018, representing Newfoundland and Labrador.

His story is remarkable because of what it says about him as a person, but it is also remarkable because of what it says about his adopted home. Describing his experience as a “Come From Away” who had recently landed in remote Newfoundland, Senator Ravalia had this to say: “The community welcomed me into their hearts and their homes. I, a single Muslim from an African country, surrounded by 2500 Protestants. . . and 10 Catholics”. As someone who also arrived in Newfoundland in the mid-80s and spent seven happy years exploring rural outports across the island, including Twillingate, I can attest to the warmth, openness, and generosity of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Now, most newcomers to the province expect to carry the “Come From Away” label their whole life, perhaps even for the lives of their children and grandchildren. In Senator Ravalia’s case, however, I have already heard it said that “He is such a true Newfoundlander, he must have come over on the first fishing boat.” That may be the highest praise that any newcomer to the province can receive.

Senator Ravalia said in a 2017 speech that he left Rhodesia to escape a society which defined him solely by his ethnicity, and to be in a country where he could experience democracy. He is now in the upper house of the parliament in that country, where he will not only experience democracy, but also contribute to its proper functioning.

Senator Ravalia: On behalf of the Independent Senators Group, welcome to the Senate of Canada. We look forward to working with you.

