



MARGARET MITCHELL, M.P.
VANCOUVER EAST
HOUSE OF COMMONS
OTTAWA, K1A 0A6

HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

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September 6, 1983

The Right Honourable Pierre Elliot Trudeau
Prime Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Trudeau:

Re: Compensation to Chinese-Canadians for
Head Tax paid under discriminatory laws

I am writing on behalf of a number of elderly citizens of Chinese origin who came to Canada in the early part of this century. They experienced discrimination and prejudice in many forms, one of which was the Head Tax imposed by our federal government of the time pursuant to the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. The racist legislation imposed a \$50 tax on every Chinese immigrant upon entry. The tax was increased to \$100 by 1900 and to \$500 by 1923. In total, our federal government collected \$24,000,000 in Head Tax from the Chinese immigrants.

Those were the days. Now we boast our Canadian Charter of Rights, which purports to guarantee and safeguard equality for all regardless of their race or ethnic origin. Yet many of our Chinese-Canadian senior citizens who had been subject to the discriminatory Head Tax remain uncompensated.

I therefore ask that the federal government undertake to compensate those Chinese-Canadian citizens who have proof of having paid the Head Tax, by repaying it with interest. As a test case, I enclose the photocopies of the Head Tax receipt, and Citizenship certificate of Mr. DAK LEON MARK, also known as Mark Aik Liang, who has asked me to intervene on his behalf.

Another Chinese-Canadian senior citizen, Mr. Shack Yee, has also paid \$500 head tax when he entered Canada in 1918. He was 15 years old. He washed dishes in a restaurant in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. Later, he worked in Winnipeg, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw, as a waiter at first and as a cook subsequently, before finally retiring in Vancouver. He had a wife in China who was unable to join him in Canada because of the prohibitory immigration laws at the time. She gave him a son, who has in turn married and raised his own family in China. Now, after 65 years of hard work, Mr. Shack Yee's only wish is to have his grandson brought over to Canada to look after him in his old age. His applications has been repeatedly rejected. My intervention on his behalf in appealing to the Minister of Immigration and Employment also failed to produce any favorable results.

It is my sincere hope that this case would be reconsidered in view of the inequities suffered by Mr. Shack Yee under the discriminatory immigration laws in the early part of this century. Perhaps, instead of repaying Mr. Yee the Head Tax plus interest, our government should grant him his wish to be joined in Canada by his grandson. For your reference, the Vancouver Immigration file number for Mr. Yee is 5133-XY-45789.

I look forward to your early reply.

Yours truly,

Margaret Mitchell, M.P.
Vancouver East

cc. Mr. Dak Leon Mark
Mr. Shack Yee