

Words Matter

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January 29 should have been just another day. Unfortunately, because of the terrible tragedy at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec in Quebec City, it will never be again.

I don't pretend to understand what happens in a person's belief system that leads them to plan and follow through with such a horrendous level of destruction.

The shooter has given no reason as to why he walked into a place of worship and killed six and injured another 19.

In the coming months there will be many individuals who will try to explain what happened, hopefully fewer who will try to justify this act. Ultimately it comes down to this: the accused chose to inflict as much pain as possible on people who were praying in their place of worship ? their sanctuary.

Destroying lives and tearing apart families and communities in the process.

With the exception of our indigenous population, Canada is a country of immigrants.

Our country's history speaks about waves of immigrants who chose Canada because it had the potential to give their families a better future. Over the years, newcomers have chosen Canada for a number of reasons.

Individuals and families look to Canada because it does not discriminate against race, religion or culture.

Now, more than ever, we need to remind ourselves of that important detail.

Many of us can trace our families' emigration to Canada from a very specific event: the potato famine, the underground railroad, the exodus after the First and Second World War, families who risked their lives looking for a better life ? the list is long and varied and the stories will continue

Some Canadians and those who chose to settle in our country did so because of the educational and economic opportunities that were not available to them ?back home.? Citizens from around the world choose Canada because it is a refuge from war, persecution and hate.

Let's make Canada's 150 truly a year to commemorate our beginnings as a nation and learn about our newest Canadians. Let's remember that 2017 should be about celebrating our country's ability to come together as a nation, and spend less time finding reasons to distrust one another.

Let's try to spend less time on social media and behind closed doors talking about ?them? and instead concentrate on ?us.?

I don't have all the answers on how government can avoid another incident like the massacre in Quebec, but I do know that we could start by appreciating the incredible blessing that allows us to live and raise our families in Canada.

After the tragedy on January 29, Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard was quoted to say ?words matter?.

Indeed they do.

As your MPP, in 2017 I want to celebrate our diversity, our strength and share why we are so proud to call Canada and Ontario home.

I hope you join me.