

*Statement by the Consul General of Sri Lanka
on the Motion to Recognize Sri Lankan New Year Day*

As the Consul General of Sri Lanka, I thank you for this opportunity to speak here today. I am aware that recently, a Sri Lankan-Canadian delegate spoke passionately to request that Sri Lankan New Year Day be recognized by the Toronto Catholic District School Board. I feel inspired as a fellow Sri Lankan by Kumari's courage to speak for all the Sri Lankans who are part of this community. Tonight, I wish to tell you why this celebration is so important to all the Sri Lankan people in Canada and around the world.

Back home in Sri Lanka, this festival is better known as the Sinhala-Tamil New Year. Despite its name, it is the highlight of the year for all Sri Lankans regardless of ethnicity or faith. The culture and values of Sri Lanka are reflected in our diversity. There are multiple ethnicities, religions and languages spoken in Sri Lanka. Sinhalese, Moor, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher are a few. In Sri Lanka you will find mosques, kovils, temples and churches built side-by-side reflecting the diversity and friendship that exists among our people.

Sri Lankans enjoy a unique, humble and artistic lifestyle. We deeply value entertaining and are known for our warm hospitality. Plates of home-made sweets are exchanged between neighbors and tradition dictates that those plates must not be returned empty. Customs and traditions have been deeply ingrained and passed down from one generation to the next for over 2,500 years. These traditions are lovingly intertwined in day-to-day life among all our people.

The underlying message of the New Year celebration are the tenets of unity and hope for the future. Leaving behind any resentments and misunderstandings of the past and ushering in a new beginning is the key to the future of our nation. Sinhala-Tamil New Year has always been annually celebrated in the spirit of unity and inclusivity, fostering positive transformation of the heart and the mind.

Recognizing the Sri Lankan New Year Day would be a wonderful step forward to acknowledging the diversity of the Sri Lankan population in your community and to fostering unity among all who live here.

I thank you for your consideration of this Motion.

by Thushara Rodrigo



SRI LANKAN HERITAGE MONTH

April 2022

WHEREAS, Ottawa is home to a large and vibrant Sri Lankan community; and

WHEREAS, since the first Sri Lankans arrived in Canada in the 1950s, Sri Lankan-Canadians have made significant contributions to many industries ranging from civil service, university academia, medical and engineering professions, agriculture and agri-business, computer sciences, banking, arts and crafts, service, manufacturing and many other industries. Their contribution to Canada and to Ottawa is immeasurable; and

WHEREAS, "Aluth Avurudu" or New Year is the biggest of all celebratory festivals in the Sri Lankan community and it falls in April; and

WHEREAS, Sri Lankan Heritage Month will bring Canadians together to express their civic pride and to express their commitment to Canada by performing artistic activities, taking part in Canadian celebrations, sharing Canadian values and enriching the Canadian society with their practices of colourful heritage;

THEREFORE, I, Jim Watson, Mayor of the City of Ottawa, do hereby proclaim **April 2022 Sri Lankan Heritage Month** in Ottawa.

Jim Watson
Mayor / Maire

MOIS DU PATRIMOINE SRI-LANKAIS

Avril 2022

ATTENDU QU'Ottawa abrite une communauté sri-lankaise importante et dynamique; et

ATTENDU QUE depuis l'arrivée des premiers Sri-Lankais au Canada dans les années 1950, les Canadiens d'origine sri-lankaise ont apporté d'importantes contributions dans divers domaines allant de la fonction publique aux universités, en passant par les professions médicales et l'ingénierie, l'agriculture et l'agroalimentaire, les sciences informatiques, les activités bancaires, l'artisanat d'art, les industries de services, la fabrication et de nombreuses autres industries. Leur contribution au Canada et à Ottawa est incommensurable; et

ATTENDU QUE « Aluth Avurudu » ou Nouvel An est le plus grand de tous les festivals dans la communauté sri-lankaise et qu'il tombe en avril; et

ATTENDU QUE le Mois du patrimoine sri-lankais réunira les Canadiens pour exprimer leur fierté civique et leur engagement envers le Canada en effectuant des activités artistiques, en participant à des célébrations canadiennes, en partageant les valeurs canadiennes et en enrichissant la société canadienne avec leurs pratiques patrimoniales hautes en couleur;

PAR CONSÉQUENT, je, Jim Watson, maire de la Ville d'Ottawa, proclame par la présente, **avril 2022 Mois du patrimoine sri-lankais** à Ottawa.

