

NOTES FOR REMARKS

Michael Walker

Councillor, City of Toronto, St. Paul's

to the

National Rally to Celebrate Falun Dafa Month

Queen's Park, Toronto
May 13, 2009

Thank you.

Today is a day of mixed emotions.

On one hand, we are here today to protest 10 years of persecution and the denial of civil rights.

On the other hand, we are here to celebrate the enduring spirit of millions of people who believe that this offensive activity has no place in our lives ... and no place in our world.

When Falun Dafa was first introduced to China in 1992, it represented a practice that was peaceful and without political intent.

Its primary teachings of Truthfulness, Compassion, Benevolence and Tolerance are virtues by which all thoughtful people can attempt to find meaning, healing and spiritual sustenance.

The appeal of these teachings is a testament to their success, having spread to more than 60 countries and attracted as many as 100 million people from all walks of life and all cultural backgrounds.

In the eyes of the government of the People's Republic of China, where matters of faith and spirit are forced to reside outside of Marxist ideologies, Falun Gong first became a threat, and then a cult, and then a movement to be crushed.

And so began a series of state-led abuses and violations of basic human rights ... a list of wrongdoings as long as it is reprehensible.

The ransacking of homes ... the confiscation of books ... the arbitrary detainment and arrest of practitioners ... extortion, mistreatment and torture ... enslavement and disappearance ... the distribution of propaganda and defamation ... the silencing of voices.

The fact of these abuses is beyond doubt.

So too is the unwillingness of the Chinese government even to acknowledge them.

And that is why we are here today.

As Canadians, we value our hard-earned freedoms.

As citizens of the world, we take it as a fundamental responsibility of citizenship to help bring those freedoms to others.

The persecution of Falun Gong forces us to recognize that those freedoms have been deliberately denied the sustenance to grow and to prosper.

Today, we commit ... as we have before ... and as we will forever ... to the restoration of those freedoms.

As a member of Toronto City Council, I am honoured to do exactly that.

Like you, I call on the Chinese authorities to abandon their flagrant abuses of human rights...

To accept that persecution has no place in a civilized society...

To recognize that spirit can never succumb to submission...

And to grant the freedoms to which all law abiding people throughout our world are entitled.

Thank you.