

Calgary alderman wants review of policy on Sikh kirpans

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD SEPTEMBER 30, 2009 7:57 AM



"It quite simply is not OK," Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said of the convention centre's decision at the Aug. 2 event to refuse to admit Sikhs wearing the ceremonial dagger. "It gave, in my view, a black eye to the city of Calgary."

Photograph by: Christina Ryan, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - An alderman is calling for a review of the policy on kirpans at civic facilities after an "embarrassing" incident at a concert by a Punjabi star at the Telus Convention Centre last month.

"It quite simply is not OK," Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said of the convention centre's decision at the Aug. 2 event to refuse to admit Sikhs wearing the ceremonial dagger. "It gave, in my view, a black eye to the city of Calgary."

She will ask her council colleagues to back a review of the policy surrounding kirpans at civic entities.

"It really sends a negative message to the community," Colley-Urquhart said, calling it discriminatory.

A spokesperson for the convention centre did not return calls Tuesday.

Colley-Urquhart pointed out that city council has signed the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination charter.

She wants the review on all civic partner facilities -- which could include the zoo, library and convention centre -- to report back before March "to avoid similar incidents."

At the concert featuring Gurdas Maan, convention centre security refused entry to a number of men wearing kirpans, a ceremonial dagger worn by observant Sikhs.

When the situation heated up, the convention centre cancelled the concert. Police were called to disperse the crowd.

At the time, convention centre staff said the kirpans, some with blades up to 12 centimetres long, were considered weapons and violated the building's safety policy. Small, locket-style kirpans typically allowed on flights would have been acceptable, the spokesperson said.

Promoter Nirmal Dhaliwal, based in Vancouver, said he is still considering legal action against the centre.

"The community is very angry," he said. "The community is not willing to accept this."

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