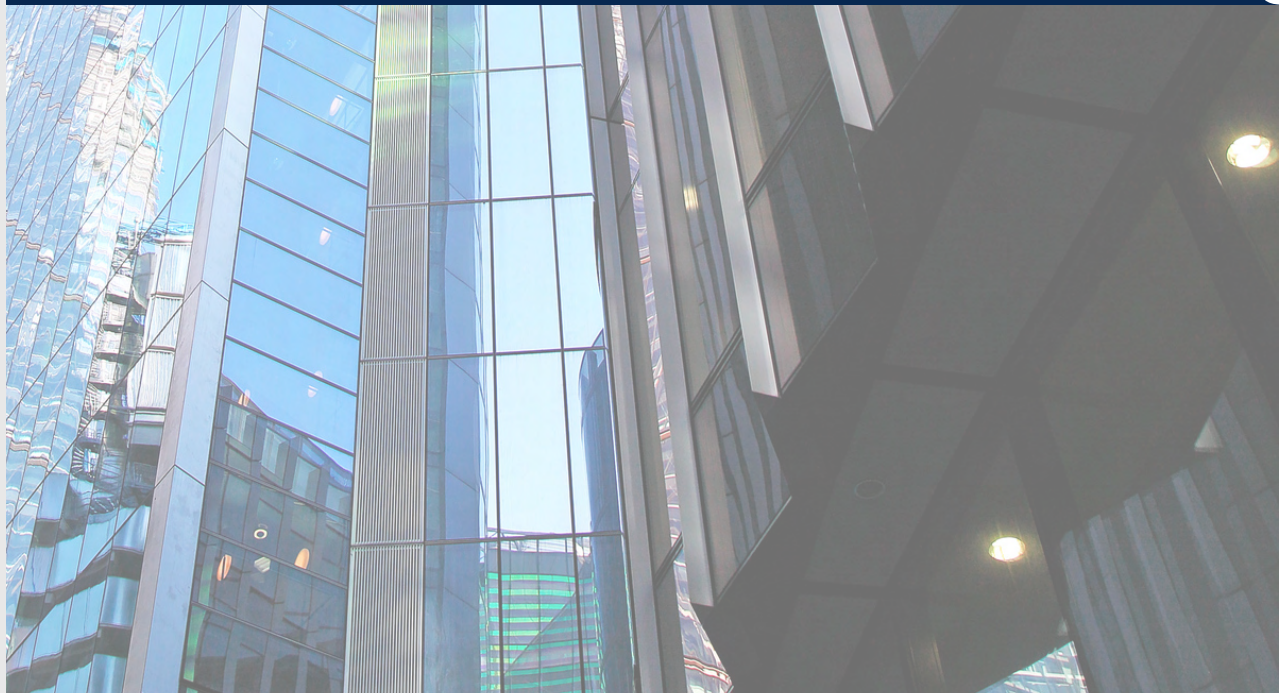




# President's Report 2022

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This report presents  
an overview of our  
2022 results, our  
achievements and our  
progress.



**WORLD SIKH  
ORGANIZATION  
OF CANADA**

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# Message from the President

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## Waheguru Jee Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Kee Fateh!

What a year 2022 was! It was filled with many challenges but with the support of the community, we were able to continue our fight to uphold and promote the rights of Sikhs in Canada. With a new, diverse, and energized board, we worked hard to make a positive difference.

I sometimes get asked, what the WSO does? In a nutshell, our organization has 4 main pillars:

- 1 | Human Rights and Civil Liberties** - Our Legal team advises and advocates on behalf of Sikhs in Canada who have experienced violations of their human rights and civil liberties. Sikhs across Canada still face issues regarding the accommodation of their articles of faith in the workplace or schools.
- 2 | Community Development** - We have many community capacity-building initiatives, such as the Sikh Family Helpline, Sikh Youth Leadership Institute, and the Sikh Mentorship Program. These programs were developed to address key gaps and meet the unique needs of our community.
- 3 | Advocacy** - Protecting the interests of Canadian Sikhs requires vigilance and sustained advocacy. We endeavour to be active in meeting with decision-makers and ensuring the Sikh voice is heard and responded to with meaningful action.
- 4 | Media Engagement** - We monitor local and national media in order to identify and respond to issues that matter to the Sikh community. We act as a credible spokesperson for Sikhs in Canada. We have also expanded our reach to ensure we are relevant in Punjabi media and social media channels.



# Message from the President

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One of the most impactful issues for the WSO, and for me personally, has been our struggle against Bill 21. This year our legal team appeared at the Quebec Court of Appeals in our ongoing legal challenge of this racist law. While we wait for the verdict, we remain confident that the courts will recognize how unjust and discriminatory this law is.

This year we also worked on numerous accommodations of Sikh articles of faith including dastaar accommodations at worksites and PPE for Sikh healthcare workers. We also continue to advocate for international students and the struggles they face with exploitative post-secondary, housing and employment systems. Lastly, we continued to monitor and confront foreign interference against the Sikh community.

We are grateful for the opportunity to do seva for our community. This work is only possible with the generous financial support of our donors. I would like to thank you all for continuing to support the work of WSO. If you are not a monthly recurring donor, please sign up now at [www.worldsikh.org/dasvandmonthly](http://www.worldsikh.org/dasvandmonthly). Your contributions will ensure that WSO can continue to be the credible and informed voice on Sikh issues and advocate effectively at all levels of government and across all sectors.

Sincerely



**Tejinder Singh Sidhu**  
President

# Legal Update

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2022 was another busy year for WSO's legal team. Every week we receive numerous calls and emails from Sikhs requiring assistance at either work or school or elsewhere, while practicing their faith. In addition to addressing individual cases, in 2022 we were able to address several issues that affected Canadian Sikhs and continued to work on creating systemic solutions and providing education on the Sikh faith.



The WSO has been a leader when it comes to facilitating the accommodation of the kirpan and ensuring Sikhs can freely practice their faith in every setting.

**Balpreet Singh**  
Legal Counsel

Some notable cases are as follows:

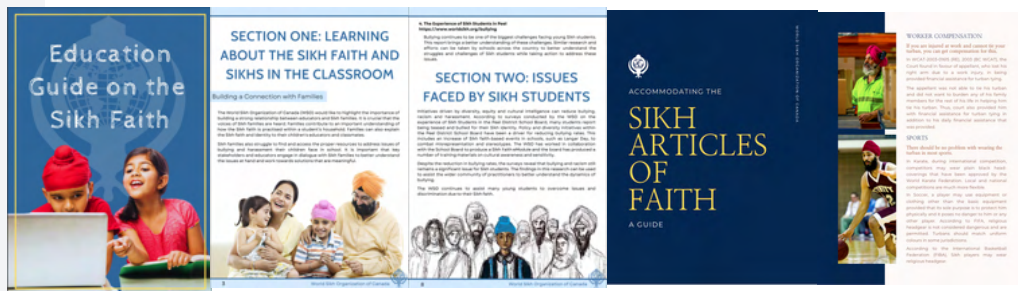
A newcomer Sikh couple to Canada attended at a Service Canada office in the Greater Toronto Area in order to obtain SIN cards. The security guard at the door refused to let the couple in because they were wearing kirpans. A senior security guard then came and told them in Hindi that they take their kirpans off to bathe so they would have to do the same to enter the premises. This was of course false as Sikhs never remove the kirpan, even when bathing. The WSO contacted the Assistant Deputy Minister for Service Canada and the situation was quickly resolved with assurances that staff would receive the necessary re-training and corrective measures would be implemented.

Service BC - a Sikh client was turned away from a Service BC office due to the kirpan. Once again, the WSO resolved this situation very quickly with the intervention of the ministry.

# Legal Update Continued

We had candidates for licensing exams at the National Dental Assisting Examining Board and another at the Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) report that they were denied the right to appear for an exam while wearing the kirpan. The WSO worked with both bodies to ensure that rules were amended to clarify that Sikh candidates can write their exams while wearing the kirpan.

Hospitals- a Sikh visitor to Lakeridge Hospital in Ajax Ontario and a security guard at Sechelt Hospital in British Columbia were told they cannot wear the kirpan on hospital grounds. Both situations were resolved. WSO worked with Lakeridge hospital to create a policy for the accommodation of the kirpan.



The WSO has been called on by several government bodies and employers to provide information on the Sikh faith and best practices when interacting with Sikhs. Training sessions were provided to several groups including the Peel Regional Police, WorkSafeBC, Legal Aid Ontario and Mohawk College. The WSO team also provided background information and research to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada with respect to the situation of Sikhs in India and in response to several specific inquiries about Sikh political advocacy.

The WSO continued to assist Sikh students who faced challenges at school. In one instance in Quebec, a black Sikh student was told he would not be permitted to wear his patka because the school did not understand that Sikhs could come from any background or nationality. Other situations WSO intervened in included a Sikh student who was told he would have to remove his Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale hoodie while at a school; a grade one student who had her kirpan taken away by her teacher; a grade three Sikh student who was bullied and assaulted at school, including having his kes ripped out. In each situation the WSO filed a formal complaint with the school board and received a written response addressing the incidents in question and the steps being taken to address them moving forward.

# Legal Update Continued

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One of the most prominent wins for the WSO in 2022 was the reinstatement of over 100 Sikh security guards at City of Toronto sites in July. The WSO learned that the security guards had been dismissed because of a new clean shave policy in order for them to be tested for N95 respirators. The WSO worked behind the scenes for weeks to have the situation addressed; however, seeing that progress was not being made, a press release was issued highlighting the injustice taking place. Within 48 hours, the City of Toronto publicly apologised to the WSO and reinstated the dismissed security guards. The City clarified that all security contractors would have to accommodate freedom of religion, failing which contracts would be canceled. This was another example of WSO's ability to advocate not just in courthouses or tribunals but also through the media in order to achieve results.

Reviewing every case WSO successfully resolved over the year would make this overview much too long. However it is sufficient to say that WSO continues to stand strongly behind the Sikh community in Canada and is prepared to face ever

# Staff

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This year WSO hired 2 new staff members to increase the organization's bandwidth to tackle and advocate for ongoing community issues. We hired a marketing and communications coordinator along with a program coordinator, who both have extensive backgrounds working with the Sikh community and are passionate about advocating for Sikh causes.



**PRABHJOT KAUR**

Prabhjot was born and raised in Brampton, Ontario. She holds a diploma in Social Service Work from Seneca College and has been engaged in community development since 2018. Prabhjot has always been very community-focused and has worked on various projects and initiatives within the community. In her spare time, you can find Prabhjot working with Laadliyan, a grassroots organization, working toward empowering girls and women in the South Asian community.



**TUVRAEN KAUR**

Tuvraen Kaur is born and raised in Brampton, ON. She graduated from York University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and also holds a Certificate in Mediation. Currently she is pursuing a Masters in Counselling Psychotherapy, in hopes of working in the community to help combat the stigma that continues to surround mental health. Tuvraen is passionate about fighting against injustice and providing a voice through advocacy.



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# Press Releases

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[Canadian Gurdwaras in Crisis Due to Restrictive Visa Policies](#)

[WSO Statement on Emergencies Act](#)

[WSO Welcomes arrival of Afghan Sikh Refugees - Fears for those left behind](#)

[Karnataka Hijab Ban a Threat to All Minorities](#)

[WSO Welcomes Accommodation for Bearded Alberta Corrections Officers](#)

[WSO Deeply Concerned by Killings of Sikh Traders in Pakistan](#)

[WSO Shocked by Plight of Alpha College International Students](#)

[Sikh Organizations Call on Ontario Parties to Address International Student Crisis](#)

[Ottawa Bomb Hoax Targeting Sikh Rally Deeply Concerning: WSO](#)

[WSO Calls on Government of Canada to Immediately Evacuate Afghan Sikhs & Hindus](#)

[City of Toronto No-Beards Rule Forces Out Sikh Security Guards](#)

[WSO Statement on Domestic Violence](#)

[Exclusion of Punjab from Expanded India-Canada Flights Unacceptable - WSO](#)

[Sikhs Weary of Increased Foreign Interference in wake of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy](#)

A woman in a red blazer stands at a podium on the left, addressing a seated audience. A large screen in the background displays a presentation slide. The room features modern lighting and a projector mounted on the ceiling. A dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text 'Community Programming' in white serif font.

# Community Programming

## Sikh Family Helpline

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The Sikh Family Helpline is a national peer-to-peer counselling service that provides culturally respectful care and system navigation support. In 2022, we saw a significant increase in callers seeking supports for mental health and gender-based violence - indicating key issues in the community. WSO also continues to receive a high level of calls from international students who face exploitation and have difficulty navigating systems. The WSO will continue to serve the unmet needs of the community through the Sikh Family Helpline and leverage learnings from this space to advocate for services and support that will promote the health and well-being of the community.

## International Students

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International students are one of our greatest strengths in Canadian society, as we see them contribute to and flourish across communities in Canada. International students also continue to face barriers, challenges, and exploitative practices - most commonly in academic, health care, employment, housing and immigration systems. This year, the WSO was able to organize and effectively support international students protesting against the exploitative practices of their colleges. The organization also continues to advocate on all levels of government on tuition, permanent residency (PR)R status, work permits, housing and health issues. WSO remains committed to advocating with students from a place of strength and celebrating their accomplishments.



"International students are a vulnerable group in Canada that face exploitation on many different levels and lack the supports they need and deserve."

[Press Release \(May 23, 2022\): WSO Shocked by the Plight of Alpha College International Students](#)



## #AskCanadianSikhs Podcast

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The #AskCanadianSikhs podcast is released on the first Tuesday of every month and can be found on all streaming platforms. Each month Dr. Jaspreet Kaur Bal, VP of Ontario and Harman Singh Kandola, VP of Alberta address the most timely and often controversial topics and events impacting Sikhs in Canada. Topics of discussion this year have ranged from local elections, Afghan Sikhs, Khalistan and foreign interference. If you've missed an episode, podcasts can be found on Spotify, and Apple.

Over  
**2200+**  
Podcast Listeners in 2022

## Sikh Mentorship Program

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The Sikh Mentorship program is now in its fourth year. This program provides a forum for Sikh youth to gain access to working professionals from various different fields across Canada. The Sikh mentorship program creates a safe space for Sikh youth to engage with professionals who can share their lived experiences as Sikh professionals. This year WSO connected over 70 youth with mentors across Canada.

The Sikh Mentorship Program also hosts networking events across Canada, providing students with the opportunity to connect with Sikhs from many different professions and spaces to explore new ideas and connections.



FOLLOW

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## Sikh Youth Leadership Institute

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Last year WSO delivered the 8th annual Sikh Youth Leadership Institute (SYLI) program in Ottawa. This is a five-day leadership training program for 20 of the brightest up-and-coming Sikh leaders from all across Canada. The SYLI program included training on emotional intelligence, effective media engagement, Sikhi and leadership, in addition to much more. The theme for 2022 was #TRAILBLAZER.

### 2022 SYLI GUEST SPEAKERS

Balpreet Singh	Legal Counsel for WSO
George Chahal	Liberal MP
Harneet Singh	Marketing Strategist
Jasraj Singh Hallan	Conservative MP
Lakhdeep Singh	Chief Diversity Officer at Milton Public Library
Rena Heer	Journalist & Account Director at Edelman Vancouver
Jaskaran Sandhu	Baaz News Co-Founder



## One Billion Rising

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One Billion Rising is a response to a call to action based on the staggering statistic that 1 in 3 women on the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. With a world population of over 7 billion, this adds up to more than one billion women and girls.

In February 2022, WSO assembled 2,600 care packages for women and children and delivered them to shelters in 11 different cities across Canada. These cities included Surrey, Victoria, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, London, Edmonton, Sault Ste. Marie, Ottawa, and Montreal. WSO is committed to raising awareness about this issue in the community and supporting women and children who are survivors of gender-based violence.

# Advocacy





## Foreign Interference

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Over the last few years, WSO has noticed an uptick in the level of foreign interference. India has consistently pressured Canada to silence Sikh voices advocating for Khalistan or criticizing India's human rights record. An example of this was when India issued a travel advisory for Indians in Canada which was without any merit and was politically motivated. Another example of foreign interference in 2022 was the rally in Ottawa to commemorate the 1984 Sikh Genocide. A false tip was sent to law enforcement causing them to detain two organizers of the rally. After further investigations, officers realized it was a hoax and the organizers were released without charge. This does not come as a shock to the Sikh community as we are often labelled as extremists/terrorists by the Indian government when it comes to Sikh expression. WSO will continue to strongly advocate at every level for the right of Sikhs in Canada to freely express their beliefs free from this foreign interference

[Press Release \(June 13, 2022\): Ottawa Bomb Hoax Targeting Sikh Rally Deeply Concerning](#)

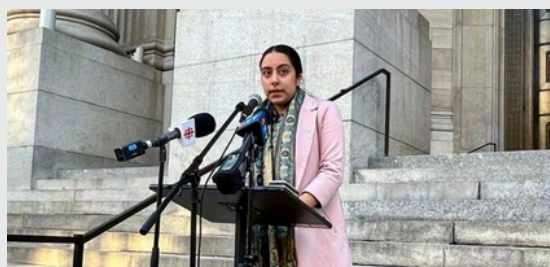


## Bill 21

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It's disheartening to see that we still have to continue the fight against Bill 21 for our basic rights as Canadian Sikhs. In November 2022 WSO's legal team continued the fight against Bill 21 at the Quebec Court of Appeals and is working to get this law overturned. WSO have been working hard on the ground to ensure that Canadians understand the detrimental effects of this law and the not-withstanding clause in the charter.

One bright spot from this crisis was seeing cities across Canada unifying together against Bill 21 with some offering monetary support for the legal challenge. Municipalities such as Brampton ON, Durham ON, Kingston ON, London ON, Markham ON, Oakville ON, Toronto ON, Victoria BC, Whitby ON, and Winnipeg MB all helped to level the playing field by contributing financially. Even Sheridan College in Brampton showed its support for Human Rights.





ACCOMMODATING THE

# SIKH ARTICLES OF FAITH

A GUIDE

## Sikh Articles of Faith Guide

Every year the WSO is disheartened by the number of cases regarding articles of faith accommodations. Every week the WSO has new cases brought to the organization's attention. Due to this, the WSO has created a guide to the Sikh articles of Faith that is available to download on the WSO's website. This guide provides information on the significance of the Sikh Articles of Faith and also guidance on how they can be worn in various settings. Our organization's hope is that this guide will help non-Sikhs understand the importance of the Sikh articles of faith and how they must legally be permitted in a variety of settings.

## Toronto Sikh Security Guards

This year over 100 Sikh Security guards were laid off due to Toronto's no-beard policy. The reasoning was a blanket policy that required the N-95 masks while on the job, a policy that was outside the typical medical context and had no precedent. It is important to note that during the height of the pandemic, these security guards were the ones who worked tirelessly to keep the community safe. WSO was able to ensure that all 100 security guards were reinstated and worked on a revised mask accommodation including the introduction of the Singh Thatha method for the first time in Canada.

## Federal Lobby Day

In October, members of the WSO executive team spent the day in Ottawa meeting with MPs from the Liberal Party, Conservative Party, and New Democratic Party. The executive team raised key issues that are important to the Sikh community, including accommodation of Sikhs in the workplace, Bill 21, International Student issues and supports, foreign interference in the Sikh community, and Afghan Sikh refugees.



## Sikh Stock Images

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In December, the WSO was excited to announce the release of our Sikh stock image project, Sikh Representation Matters. This project ensures the diversity of the Sikh community is represented accurately and proudly. The project released hundreds of stock images that are now available for anyone to use, free of charge.

These images capture Sikhs in everyday life, as well as in jobs in pharmacy, nursing, trucking and much more. These images are available on [www.pexels.com/@worldsikhorg/](https://www.pexels.com/@worldsikhorg/)

The WSO will continue working on uploading more images in 2023. Many public and private sector organizations have reached out to let us know the images have already been incorporated and promoted for use. Feel free to use these images in your next presentation or project!



## British Columbia Anti Racism Legislation

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In June 2022, the WSO participated as a key stakeholder with the Province of BC to begin work that will create systems to collect intersectional demographic data, such as age, gender identity and ethnic origin. This data is critical to help decision-makers with evidence-informed and inclusive decision-making, especially as it relates to policy and programmatic decisions that impact racialized populations like the Sikh community.

## Afghan Sikhs and Hindus

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In March, the WSO welcomed the arrival of approximately 150 Afghan Sikh and Hindu refugees. These individuals fled Afghanistan in 2015 and had been displaced in India since that time. These families were welcomed in Calgary, Kelowna, and Vancouver, and were all privately sponsored through the generosity of the Sikh community. Sadly, the sense of relief was short-lived as in June, there was another attack on Karte Parwan Gurdwara in Kabul. There are still several hundred Afghan Sikh and Hindu refugees awaiting entry into Canada. WSO urges the Government of Canada to support this displaced community with the same sense of urgency as has been done for other refugees this past year.





# Board of Directors

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President

## Tejinder Singh Sidhu

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Tejinder is born and raised in Calgary. He's been an active member in his community for many years. He is married with 2 children. Tejinder works for a large telecommunications company in a management role. With the help of WSO, he was able to successfully win the right for Sikhs across Alberta to wear Kirpans in Courthouses.



Senior Vice President

## Sharanjeet Kaur

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Sharanjeet Kaur has a diverse professional background in the public sector, having worked across different levels of government and agencies. She is passionate about advancing public policy, advocacy, and community capacity building with the Sikh community. She has over two decades of experience supporting charities in Punjab, local Gurdwara youth engagement initiatives, and interfaith forums across numerous communities.



Vice President of British Columbia

## Guntaas Kaur Cheema

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Guntaas Kaur was born and raised in Vancouver. In 2015, Guntaas graduated from Law School at the University of Exeter. Guntaas has volunteered with many seva projects, including translating numerous documents (with her father) for the Komagata Maru Journey Project organized by Simon Fraser University; worked with WSO to conduct Sikh Patient Care Guidelines workshops for frontline healthcare staff in Metro Vancouver.

# Board of Directors

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Vice President of Alberta

## Harman Singh Kandola

Harman is a lawyer at Shoruie Bhatia LLP having completed his JD and Bachelor of Commerce in Business Law & Economics at the University of Alberta. Harman dedicated himself to public service and is currently a member of SEVA Food Truck, Punjabi Sports Association, and the Indo Canadian Liason Committee for Edmonton Police Service.



Vice President of Central Canada

## Shaizinder Kaur Dhaliwal

Shaizinder has a Masters of Applied Sciences in Electrical Engineering from University Of Regina. She is currently working as Senior Advisor in Engineering with Bell Canada. In the community, she volunteers with Regina Open Door Society to help new immigrants to start their life in Saskatchewan and has been involved in YWCA-Big sisters program. She has been involved with the WSO since 2017.



Vice President of Ontario

## Jaspreet Kaur Bal

Dr. Jaspreet Bal is a Child and Youth Care Practitioner and the Chair of Child and Family Studies at Centennial College in Toronto. A community organizer and educator, her practice involves radical youth work with underserved populations across North America. She is the editor of the Relational Child and Youth Care Practice Journal. Bal serves on the advisory board of the Sikh Research Institute and cohosts the WSO podcast #AskCanadianSikhs.



# Board of Directors

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Vice President of Quebec & Atlantic Canada

## Harginder Kaur

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Harginder Kaur was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec. She speaks fluent Punjabi, English and French. She is a second year student at Concordia University, completing a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She has been involved in several community projects with Khalsa Aid, World Sikh Organization, Concordia SSA, Amar Karma and more.



Director of Finance

## Danish Singh Brar

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Danish Singh is born and raised in Surrey, BC. Currently pursuing his CPA designation, he works as a junior accountant at a public practice accounting firm in New Westminster. He became involved with the WSO and also attended the Sikh Youth Leadership Institute in 2019.



Director of Administration

## Kirpa Kaur Grewal

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Kirpa has been engaged in the community space since a young age. She is a twice graduate of Carleton University and has received her undergraduate degree and her masters from the institution. In her spare time, Kirpa is passionate about community building and gender equality. She joined the World Sikh Organization of Canada board in 2015 and has worked on a variety of community initiatives in Ottawa and the GTA.

# Board Members

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**Daman Kaur Grewal**

ALBERTA



**Harjeet Singh Grewal**

ALBERTA



**Sonia Kaur Aujla-Bhullar**

ALBERTA



**Arjin Singh Toor**

BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Bhavenjit Kaur Dhillon**

BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Bikremjeet Singh Dhindsa**

BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Gurpreet Kaur Rai**

BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Harjit Singh Bhandar**

BRITISH COLUMBIA



# Board Members

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**Jaspreet Singh Minhas**  
BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Khushwant Kaur Verraich**  
BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Manpreet Kaur Multani**  
BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Mahekleen Kaur Gill**  
CENTRAL



**Arshpreet Singh Sekhon**  
ONTARIO



**Guntas Kaur**  
ONTARIO



**Gurpurtap Singh Toor**  
ONTARIO



**Jaskaran Singh Sandhu**  
ONTARIO



# Board Members

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**Jaspreet Singh**

ONTARIO



**Mukhbir Singh**

ONTARIO



**Siraz Kaur Chatha**

ONTARIO



**Amrit Kaur**

QUEBEC



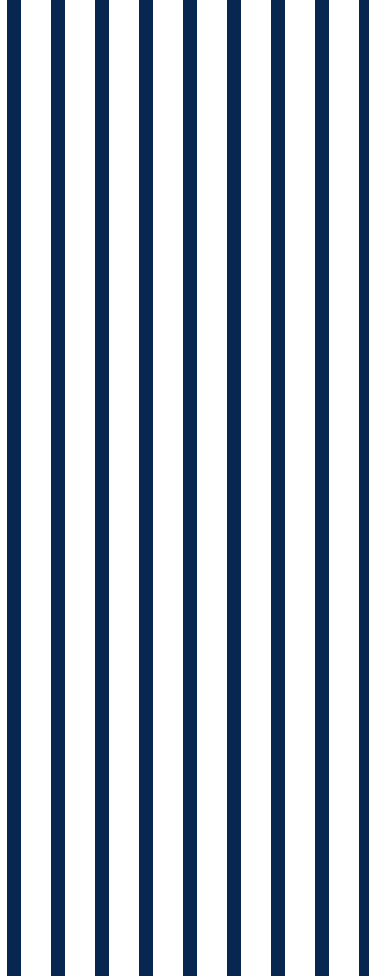
**Kanwarpal Singh Josan**

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**Mandeep Kaur Dablehar**

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CONTACT US	
1181 Cecil Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1H 7Z6	Phone: (416) 904-9110 Email: <a href="mailto:info@worldsikh.org">info@worldsikh.org</a>