

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 12, 2010**

NEW DEMOCRATS CALL FOR IMMIGRATION FAIRNESS IN FREEMAN CASE

OTTAWA – Supporters of Douglas Gary Freeman called on the government to allow him to return home to Canada today. New Democrat Immigration Critic Olivia Chow and NDP Deputy Leader Thomas Mulcair were joined by Freeman's wife, Natercia Coelho, at a news conference.

"Douglas Gary Freeman has been a respected member of the community since he arrived in Canada in 1974. It's time for the government to stop throwing up obstacles and allow him to return home to his wife and children," said Chow.

"We remain in a state of pain and suffering so long as we are not allowed to be a whole family," said Natercia Coelho, Freeman's wife. "And we cannot be a whole family until my husband is home with us where he belongs, where he deserves to be. We are hurting so much on a daily basis. Because our lives cannot go on, we cannot be normal until my husband is back home. He is a wonderful husband, a great Dad, and now a new grand-dad."

The Canadian government has said Freeman is inadmissible on "grounds of criminality" even though Canadian officials have said they do not believe he would commit any crime.

"Gary Freeman is 61 years old. He has been separated from his family for 6 years already. He presents no threat to Canada," said Mulcair. "It makes no sense and is grossly unfair to deny Freeman and his family the right to live together in Canada for another five years."

Freeman was involved in a dispute with a police officer in Chicago in 1969. More than 30 years later, U.S. authorities sought Freeman's extradition. In 2008, he agreed to plead guilty and served 30 days in a U.S. jail. After serving his sentence and probation period, he applied to return to Canada but was denied entry.

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