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To the Bahá'ís of Canada

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Two years ago, stirred by the momentum building towards the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh and conscious of its transformative potential, the National Spiritual Assembly began a series of letters to the community that spurred a more intimate conversation between us. In turn, you shared news of a tremendous flourishing of activities, of victories and wonderful challenges as you sought to more deeply understand and convey to others a sense of “what it means for humanity that these two Luminaries rose successively above the horizon of the world.” As the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb approaches, we are entering a similar period, another moment “incalculably precious”. Urged and inspired by the friends present at the National Convention, and with great joy, we return to this conversation.

Though preparations for the festivities marking the celebration of the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb have a special context, they are also an extension of the first bicentenary. At that time, the Universal House of Justice lifted our vision of what was possible as we sought to engage the “widest possible cross-section of society” in remembrance of God and service to humanity in the period leading up to the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh. Over 100,000 souls, an unprecedented number, were introduced to Him in some way, and many of them became involved in community activity through your efforts. These are seeds that you have been patiently nurturing towards fruition, and new growth has emerged through this labour of love. This is the work of the hour. As you have tended this garden, you have experienced the truth of what the House of Justice said in the Ridván message this year: “In every setting, there is pure joy in engaging other souls in meaningful and uplifting conversations that lead, whether quickly or gradually, to the stirring of spiritual susceptibilities. The brighter the flame kindled within the heart of the believer, the greater will be the force of attraction felt by those exposed to its warmth. And to a heart consumed with love for Bahá'u'lláh, what more fitting occupation can be imagined than to seek out kindred spirits, to encourage them as they enter the path of service, to accompany them as they gain experience and—perhaps the greatest joy of all—to see souls become confirmed in their faith, arise independently, and assist others on the same journey. These are among the most cherished of all the moments that this transitory life affords.”

In a letter dated 1 June 2018 addressed to all National Spiritual Assemblies, the Universal House of Justice commented on the special nature of this bicentenary, and that some features of the first would not apply. For example, this is not a time to seek public tributes from dignitaries and prominent members of society, though efforts to nurture such relationships in a natural manner would of course continue. In addition, we may have been tempted to think of the community's attention “turning” to the Báb, as it was focused on the Person of Bahá'u'lláh in 2017. Yet, in its references to this occasion, the House of Justice underlines the relationship between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, whose Cause the Báb foretold and to which He was the promised Gate. Even in recalling the stories of the heroic acts of the dawn-breakers — those youthful lionhearts — we look beyond an exploration of history. These narratives “enable the friends, who are occupied with responding to the needs of the Cause in this day, to draw inspiration and courage... They assist the company of believers to realize that, by consecrating themselves to the acts of service required in this age, they are emulating the noble qualities of their spiritual forebears.”

Powerful examples of these noble qualities were seen in the intensity, discipline and concentrated, creative effort of the friends during the period surrounding the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, and in your continued response to the National Assembly's two calls to action in April 2018. All that was learned at that time is now ready to be channeled into your efforts to nurture every seed you have planted and plant new ones, as the community advances towards the celebrations for the Twin Holy Birthdays this year. We pray that your conversations as friends, families, fellow-gardeners, at this Feast and beyond, will draw out this experience and reinforce your efforts. To this end, we hope that the friends consulting at this Feast might think about how they can carry its spirit and widen its embrace to those who have not been able to participate.

Our love and our ardent prayers are with you.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF CANADA



Karen McKye, Secretary