



# Vote 2006

## Guide to the Federal Election



Canadian Arab Federation  
Fédération canado-arabe



National Council on Canada-Arab Relations  
Conseil national des relations canado-arabes

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## Introduction

The Canadian federal election campaign is underway. This provides Canadians with a real opportunity to work together and advance on the advocacy front to ensure that key issues affecting Canadians of Arab heritage are addressed by the leaders and candidates of the national parties.

The Arab-Canadian community is diverse and spreads across both coasts. It is a fast-growing demographic that wants to be heard. We know that many of you will not only vote but will be active at the local level in events such as meetings with candidates.

To assist you in your individual advocacy efforts, the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations (NCCAR), in association with the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF), has prepared the Vote 2006 Federal Election Guide which will provide you with valuable resources on the electoral process, how to prepare for meetings with party candidates and how to identify key issues related to domestic and foreign policy. This joint effort between the two national organisations addresses immigration, national security and foreign policy issues. Of course, we realize that your concerns are not limited to these issues, but we believe they serve as a starting point for you to inform yourself on topics affecting the community and to question those seeking a chance to serve as a Member of Parliament.

In addition, we have included web links to numerous background documents, including an analysis of the 2004 election that identifies highly competitive ridings where your vote might sway results this time around. We will also make available on both organisations' websites the results of a questionnaire we will send out to party leaders.

Our hope is that this election guide will encourage you or your organisation to get vocal, get organised and make a difference.



**Hussein Amery**  
**President**  
**NCCAR**



**Faraj Nakhleh**  
**Acting President**  
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*The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations is a non-profit organisation dedicated to building bridges of cooperation and understanding between Canada and the Arab world.*

*The Canadian Arab Federation is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to identify, articulate, defend and otherwise pursue the interests of the Canadian Arab community.*

## Ready... Set...Vote!

Canadians will head to the polls on January 23, 2006 for the 39th General Election to vote for their federal Member of Parliament. Voting is a duty for all Canadians. It is our one real chance to affect the direction our nation takes, whether on domestic issues or foreign policy.

### Who Can Vote?

You are entitled to vote in federal elections and referendums if you are a Canadian citizen, and will be 18 or older on polling day. If you are an elector (a person who is eligible to vote) and have been living away from Canada for less than five consecutive years since your last visit home, you are eligible to vote under *The Special Voting Rules* available at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca). If you are a new citizen, you registered to vote if you checked off the consent box on the citizenship application, consenting to be added to the Register.

### Registration

It is the voter's responsibility to register with the National Register of Electors. If you voted in the last general election, you may be registered to vote at the address where you lived at that time. Elections Canada updates the Register from a number of sources, so if you have moved since then, your address change may also have been registered.

To make sure that you are on the list of electors, you must contact the office of your local returning officer. Contact information, including toll free numbers, can be found at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).

### Voting Overseas

If you will be outside the country on voting day, you can still vote. Please consult the Elections Canada website for instructions on how to register and vote while abroad.

### Advance Polls

Will you be on holiday or unavailable on January 23? You can take part in advance voting. Consult the Elections Canada website for more information.

### Finding your Electoral District

The Elections Canada website will allow you to find your electoral district (indicating the dates for voting and for advanced voting) by entering your postal code.

### Voter Information Kit in Arabic

Elections Canada has prepared a voter information kit in Arabic (and numerous other languages) and can be found at [http://www.elections.ca/vot/eth/VIG\\_Ara.pdf](http://www.elections.ca/vot/eth/VIG_Ara.pdf)

## Help Mobilize Other Arab Canadians

You can mobilize a team of volunteers to post or pass out fliers at Arab Canadian community centers, mosques, churches, universities and student clubs, grocery stores, restaurants—any place frequented by Arab Canadians—encouraging community members to vote.

## Transportation

One of the surest ways to make sure people get to the polls is to drive them there yourself! Recruit volunteers to drive people to the polls on Election Day, and keep in mind those who are most in need of help: the elderly, the disabled or those who don't drive. You can also organize a carpool for your office, fellow students, family and friends.

## Get Informed!

The Federal Parliament is a public institution, and therefore, all communications and policies discussed there are public domain and are made accessible to all Canadians.

## CPAC

The easiest way to gain access to the proceedings of the parliamentary sessions is to watch them on CPAC ([www.cpac.ca](http://www.cpac.ca)), a television station dedicated to providing political information live from the House of Commons and the Senate to Canadians across the country. These sessions are also available on the internet and as podcasts on your Ipod. Since Parliament has been dissolved to make way for the election campaign, the House of Commons, the Senate and their numerous committees are not sitting. There are no archives of the broadcast proceedings.

## What your MP said in Parliament

You can, however, search what particular MPs have said on issues you are interested in through the web resources of the Canadian Parliament. To access this information, visit [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca). Click on “Advanced Search” and type in keywords such as “Arab,” “Morocco,” “Palestine” or whatever issue you are interested in. Then you can select whether to search proceedings in the Senate or the House of Commons, and choose which period you wish to search in, and, preferably, choose to search in “All sections”. The results page may seem quite confusing, however simply click on any of the results and it should open a page that contains the keyword that was initially searched. Then open any results that seem pertinent to your search.

## CIC News Releases

To view statements and news releases issues by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, visit <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/press/index.html>.

## **PSEPC News Releases**

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada has a newsroom section on its website that lists all news releases issued on national security issues. To consult these, visit <http://www.psepc-sppcc.gc.ca/media/index-en.asp>.

## **FAC News Releases and International Policy Statement**

If you would like to know what was said by the Foreign Minister and International Trade Minister, you can click on Foreign Affairs Canada's (FAC) Media Room located at [www.fac-aec.gc.ca](http://www.fac-aec.gc.ca) and then click on News Releases. If you are interested in Canada's recently released International Policy Statement, visit [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cip-pic/ips/ips-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cip-pic/ips/ips-en.asp).

## **Leaders' Debates**

If you want to hear what the different party leaders are saying during the election campaign, CPAC will broadcast the leaders' debates live and provide polls showing how the different parties are faring. Most other networks also broadcast the debates live. The CBC ([www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)), for its part, provides a written summary of what was said in past debates and provides a link to view the debates on the internet in full.

Televised debates will air from 8 - 10 pm Eastern time, and are broadcast on CBC, Radio-Canada, CTV, Global and TVA.

Thurs. Dec. 15 (French)  
Fri. Dec. 16 (English)

Mon. Jan. 9 (English)  
Tues. Jan. 10 (French)

## **Party Platforms**

During an election campaign political parties will release their electoral promises, also known as their party platform. Familiarize yourself with what each party stands for.

Bloc Québécois policies:

<http://www.blocquebecois.org/archivage/blq-depsyntese-anglo.pdf> (English)

<http://www.blocquebecois.org/fr/plateforme.asp> (French)

Conservative Party policies:

<http://www.conservative.ca/EN/2326/>

Green Party policies:

[http://www.greenparty.ca/issues.html~&MMN\\_position=128:128.html](http://www.greenparty.ca/issues.html~&MMN_position=128:128.html)

Liberal Party policies:

[http://www.liberal.ca/issues\\_e.aspx](http://www.liberal.ca/issues_e.aspx)

NDP policies:

<http://www.ndp.ca/page/1850>

## 2004 Post-Election Analysis

The Canadian Arab Federation has prepared an analysis of the 2004 elections riding-by-riding. It highlights the ridings where MPs won by close margins. Please visit [www.caf.ca](http://www.caf.ca) to access this important document.

## Get Vocal!

Speaking as a constituent to your local candidates is the essence of democracy. It is a simple and effective way to get your concerns heard. In effect, you are encouraging Parliamentarians to do one of their most important jobs—listening and responding to the interests and concerns of the people they represent.

Evidence from other campaigns suggests that this approach is effective, particularly when constituents across the country are delivering the same message during an election campaign. Putting questions to candidates in your riding, eliciting their views, and asking them, if elected, to act in Parliament on your behalf, can create a groundswell towards change.

## A Step-by-Step Guide to the All-Candidates Meeting

Visit the Elections Canada website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca). Type in your postal code to find the name of your riding, your MP, and the names and party affiliations of all election candidates.

- Know your candidates: check out their websites and latest printed materials:
- Here are the links to the major parties' websites (be sure to also visit the website of any other party that has a candidate in your riding):

[www.blocquebecois.org](http://www.blocquebecois.org)

[www.conservative.ca](http://www.conservative.ca)

[www.greenparty.ca](http://www.greenparty.ca)

[www.liberal.ca](http://www.liberal.ca)

[www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca)

- Conduct a search on [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca) to see what the incumbent MP has said in the House of Commons.
- Find out if they have met with local groups before on related issues. If so, what was the outcome? To search for any news articles related to such meetings, you can enter their name and the topic of your choice in a Google News search ([www.news.google.ca](http://www.news.google.ca)) to see if their name comes up.

- Designate a speaker from your organization who will pose the question at the all-candidates forum. This could be your president, executive director, or someone else who is well-known and respected in the community.
- Prepare your question. Decide what follow-up question you will pose if necessary.
- Record each candidate's response to your question.

## **Asking Questions During the Meeting**

- Be absolutely clear about what you are asking.
- A response of any kind is useful. By posing the question in a public meeting, you are transmitting a clear signal of your interest and concern on this issue.
- Don't be disappointed if candidates are not immediately supportive. Hearing their views and justification of a position is valuable and a fundamental part of the democratic process.
- Be clear about who you are and who you represent. You may choose to emphasize your individual standing in your community as well as the number of constituents you represent.

## **General Tips**

- A typical all-candidates meeting lasts for a pre-determined period of time, usually one to two hours
- Prepare to do a lot of listening – the candidates will do most of the talking
- The question period could be open-mic or could require pre-registration on a speaker's list, you will need to research this prior to the meeting to ensure you have the opportunity to address the candidates
- Get to the microphone quickly, those at the end of the line may not be heard due to time limitations State your question concisely, clearly and in everyday language
- Keep a positive tone: listen actively, show interest in and understanding of their point of view
- Thank the candidates for their answers
- Record who has said what before leaving
- Follow-up
- Write a letter thanking each candidate for answering your question
- If they were supportive, thank them and make it clear that you expect their continued support in the House of Commons
- Complete the Feedback Form and fax or mail it to NCCAR, so we can get a better sense of what is happening in these meetings across Canada.

*These tips are drawn largely from [www.impacs.org](http://www.impacs.org)*

## Get Organised!

If your organisation would like to organise its own all-candidates meeting, the following tips will be a good starting point.

### Before

- Consider partnering with other community organizations. Cooperating to host an all- candidates meeting allows you to share costs, access a broader group of voters, build partnerships, and increase the profile of your organization.
- Secure the candidates. Present the meeting to candidates as an opportunity to speak with voters and get press coverage. Give the candidates a range of dates so that you can schedule for a day that works for everyone.
- Choose an appropriate format. At most meetings, candidates get the opportunity for a short speech followed by time for questions. A reception before or after the formal event is also a good idea because it gives voters, candidates, and organizers another chance to connect.
- Select a suitable venue. Consider parking, proximity to public transit, access for people with mobility restrictions, and room for the media and their equipment (if you plan to invite them).
- Have a sound system set up if necessary.
- Publicize. Advertise the meeting as widely as you can. Use local media, email lists, websites, networks and partners. Send out the information more than once. Remind the media directly.

### During

- Manage the proceedings. Seed some questions in the audience if needed. Have a moderator conduct the event if required. Have other information available. An all-candidates meeting is an excellent opportunity to distribute reports and materials. Have tables set up for you and your partners.
- Record the meeting if you can.

### After

- Prepare a follow-up media release. Include quotations and a media contact.
- Send thank-you letters to candidates, organizers, partners, and any other contributors.

*These tips are drawn largely from [www.assemblybcartscouncils.ca](http://www.assemblybcartscouncils.ca)*

## Meeting Feedback Form

Your name/Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Your Federal Riding Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name/Party of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date/Location of All-Candidates Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Please read these questions carefully before addressing an all-candidate's meeting. Please answer the questions as soon as possible after the meeting and return this form to NCCAR by fax (613) 235-9185 or email at [nccar@nccar.ca](mailto:nccar@nccar.ca).

### Questions

Was this the first the candidates had heard of this issue? Yes No  
If no, where did they first hear about it?

What points did each candidate seem to respond to favourably? Unfavourably?

What questions/suggestions did they have for you (please be specific)?

What aspects of this issue seemed most problematic for the candidates?

Are the candidate's willing to support this initiative by raising it in caucus (if they are elected)? In another forum?

Does any candidate want more information sent? Yes No

Which candidate?  
What material?

Is there any information or material you wish you'd had to help with this process?

## Domestic Priorities

### NATIONAL SECURITY

#### CONTEXT

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 triggered a number of legislative and policy changes in many countries around the world, including Canada. In the heat of the moment, some governments enacted wide-ranging laws and policies that they argued would address the fear and shock felt by their publics thereby making them safer. However, hindsight has affirmed the concerns of human rights advocates, academics and lawyers that the immediate response of those governments, including our own, would simply be a compact where human rights and civil liberties would be bartered away to gain nothing more than a false sense of security.

The Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) takes the security of Canadians very seriously. It is CAF's position that real safety and security can only come through substantive co-operation between our government and its Arab constituents, and respect for the rule of law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Please note the following positions are also endorsed by the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations.

#### PRESSING ISSUES

##### **1. Legislation – Respecting Rule of Law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

Canada's legislative tools in the "war on terror" include the Anti-terrorism Act, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Public Safety Act, and the impending Lawful Access bill. A number of troubling themes arise in this legislation, the most salient amongst them are: the use of secret evidence; the prevalence of secret proceedings; sharing information with states noted for human rights abuses; a definition of terrorism that makes faith a proxy for criminality; a glaring lack of accountability and transparency; detention without trial; and deportation to face torture.

**The UN Human Rights Committee has recently said in a written declaration the following:**

*"The Committee notes with concern that the amendments to the Canada Evidence Act introduced by the Anti Terrorism Act (Section 38), relating to the non disclosure of information in connection with or during the course of proceedings, including criminal proceedings, which could cause injury to international relations, national defence or national security, do not fully abide by the requirements of article 14 of the Covenant."*

##### **2. Policy & Operations – End Racial Profiling, Sloppy Investigations and Unaccountable Intelligence Information Sharing**

While we appreciate that there is no explicit policy targeting Arabs for national security scrutiny, CAF and others have noted a troubling pattern of conduct arising amongst our

communities. We are concerned that our national security agencies have established a threshold for suspicion such that simply being an Arab or Muslim may trigger an investigation. The cases of Maher Arar, Abdullah Al-Malki, Ahmed El-Matti, Mouayed Nouredin, and the 24 South Asian men caught up in the Project Thread fiasco stand as clear evidence of this pattern of conduct. Profiling has been repeatedly proven to be ineffective. Worse still, profiling alienates Arab Canadians, encourages hate and discrimination in the private spheres of life, destroys families and at the end of the day, simply fails to make Canadians any safer from the risks posed by terrorism. While offensive in their own right, profiling and sloppy investigations may also create unimaginable nightmares for innocent people. The Arar Inquiry and other revelations have painted a picture of freelancing security agencies that sometimes undertake unfounded investigations and share information with questionable regimes.

The shroud of secrecy has suffocated transparency and accountability in Canada's national security operations. As a result, innocent people have paid the price in shattered lives and a widespread chill has descended on Canada's Arab community.

CAF is concerned that the problems associated with secrecy, profiling, the lack of accountability, and the uncontrolled sharing of information with foreign security agencies will only be compounded by the implementation of "no-fly" lists and so-called "lawful" access to electronic communications. We are concerned that Canada is increasingly adopting one of the hallmark characteristics of authoritarian regimes: a wide-ranging surveillance society that is grounded in secrecy and where no one is watching the watchers.

### **Recommended Courses of Action**

- Restore the adversarial process and eliminate the use of secret evidence and secret proceedings;
- Establish real accountability and oversight of all national security operations;
- Establish a robust complaints process with effective and timely remedies;
- Abolish the use of security certificates and prohibit deportation to torture;
- Amend the definition of "terrorism" in the Anti-terrorism Act to remove the requirement to prove a religious motive in order to secure a conviction for terrorism offences;
- Launch a comprehensive inquiry into the Arab community's claims of profiling and act decisively to stop such activity where it is being practiced and prohibit recurrence;
- Strictly control the gathering, use, storage and sharing of all national security information;
- Do not share information with countries that abuse human rights or facilitate the abuse of human rights;
- Fully implement the recommendations of the Arar Inquiry when they are released;
- Build better intelligence, policy and legislation by actively engaging Canada's Arab community in the life of Canada.

## IMMIGRATION & INTEGRATION

### CONTEXT

The story of immigration is a key chapter in Canada's history and holds the answer to a successful future for our country. Canada's economy is strengthened by the flow of newcomers who come to Canada to live, work and make valuable contributions to Canadian society. In addition, the refugee selection process allows Canada to meet its international legal obligations to provide asylum from persecution. Today's Canada is a multiracial and multicultural nation that thrives on its diversity. Sixty-nine per cent of all newcomers to Canada in 2004 came from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The following are the Canadian Arab Federation's positions and recommendations.

Please note these positions are also endorsed by the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations.

### PRESSING ISSUES

#### 1. Security Certificates

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) makes provisions for detention under "security certificates", based on secret evidence. Four Arab men are currently held in detention on security certificates: Mohamed Mahjoub, Mahmoud Jaballah, Hassan Almrei and Mohamed Harkat. Adil Charkaoui was recently released on strict bail conditions. Security certificates are ostensibly exempt from the basic procedural and evidentiary safeguards guaranteed by common law and guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The target of an issued security certificate is not fully informed of the government's case or the evidence. Although security certificates are subject to limited or ex parte review by certain judges of the Federal Court, detainees and their lawyers cannot answer the case, or cross-examine sources of sometimes questionable evidence. The Federal Court's decision is final and if the security certificate is upheld, the person is deported, with no recourse to the courts or Charter protections. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has published recently that it, "is concerned by the rules and practices governing the issuance of 'security certificates' under the IRPA."

#### Recommended Course of Action

- Abolish security certificates, or in the alternative, incorporate safeguards consistent with common law and Charter protections for targets of security certificates.

#### 2. Refugee Determination System

The government announced recently that it has no plans to introduce a refugee appeal division, in spite of the fact that the IRPA provides for the establishment of an appeal process. A refugee appeal division is necessary to ensure transparency in the refugee determination process and an avenue to redress wrong decisions. Without a clear route for appeal, failed claimants undertake costly and resource-consuming strategic procedural delays. Canada is the only country in the Western world that doesn't have a procedural mechanism to appeal on the merits.

### **Recommended Courses of Action**

- Establish a merit-based and transparent selection process for the appointment of Immigration and Refugee Board members which shall include criteria to ensure cultural sensitivity and a strong understanding of Canada's human rights obligations;
- Implement an internal appeal process on the merits within the Immigration and Refugee Board for refugee claimants.

### **3. Safe Third Country Agreement**

This agreement between Canada and the US requires refugee claimants who travel through the US to file their claims in that country. This deprives asylum seekers of the fundamental right to seek protection from the country from which they are most likely to receive it. The Safe Third Country Agreement violates the spirit of refugee protection by refusing them entry and returning them to the US which may detain or even deport them back to the country they fled. The 1951 Refugee Convention does not require that individuals seek asylum in the first country in which they arrive.

### **Recommended Course of Action**

- Reinforce Canada's commitment to refugee protection by revoking the Safe Third Country Agreement or amend the legislation to permit asylum seekers from the US.

### **4. Deportation of Palestinian Refugees**

Canada inconsistently denies refugee claims of stateless Palestinians and removes them to the Occupied Territories or to refugee camps in neighbouring Arab countries – particularly to Lebanon. It has happened that members of the same family and exactly the same circumstances receive different judgments. In removing stateless Palestinian refugee claimants, Canada is effectively returning them to face persecution as the current Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip violates a plethora of international human rights conventions which Canada has ratified. The stateless Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, often residing in 57 year old refugee camps, face systematic discrimination and human rights abuses, are not accorded the host state's protection, are denied any possibility of citizenship and receive no direct and inviolable international protection. This is in clear violation of Canada's human rights obligations under international and domestic law.

### **Recommended Course of Action**

- Immediately decree a moratorium on the removal of Palestinians to the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip;
- In light of the unique circumstances faced by stateless Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, facilitate the Humanitarian & Compassionate process to allow the refused refugee claimants to be granted permanent resident status in Canada.

### **5. Accreditation of Foreign-Trained Professionals**

Many of Canada's newcomers are professionals who are unable to work in their chosen fields because professional regulatory bodies do not recognize their qualifications. These educated newcomers, who were allowed to immigrate to Canada based on their education and professional credentials, are dealt an injustice

and relegated to the ranks of the unemployed and the underemployed...these are missed opportunities to enhance Canada's professional labour force.

**Recommended Course of Action**

- The federal government must take the initiative to bring together federal and provincial professional regulatory bodies to effectively address accreditation of foreign-trained professionals before immigrants are landed or to speed up the accreditation process once landed.

**6. Representation**

The Federal government annually appoints a large number of individuals through a process based on experience, qualifications and merit. The Canadian Arab Federation believes that it is essential to ensure broad racial and ethnic representation in this process.

As Canada becomes one of the most diverse countries the world the inclusion of diversity within all public systems should be viewed as a necessity. CAF therefore encourages the federal government to reach out to ethno-racial communities and to remove any real or perceived barriers for members of these communities. It is essential that all Canadians have equal access to employment opportunities within the Government of Canada which includes appointments to agencies, boards and commissions.

**7. Cultural and Academic Exchange**

In a climate driven by security interests, individuals and groups from Arab countries face increasing difficulty in obtaining visas to come to Canada for cultural and educational exchanges. For example, in 2004, a group of young men and women from the Palestinian town of Nablus applied for visas to participate in a cross-Canada tour. Their visa applications were rejected based on criteria that were culturally inappropriate and which failed to accommodate the challenging circumstances of young people under military occupation. They faced an arduous battle to attend educational and cross-cultural tours in Canada.

**Recommended Course of Action**

- Revise visa requirements to incorporate understanding of cultural appropriateness and encourage the issuance of visas for the purpose of promoting cultural and educational exchanges between Canadians and Arabs.

## Foreign Policy Priorities

### CONTEXT

Since the days of the Right Honourable Lester Pearson, Canada has enjoyed a proud reputation as a quintessential peacekeeper, a protector of human rights, a promoter of international law and a provider of humanitarian aid. It is this reputation that has attracted many of Canada's immigrants, particularly those from Arab countries.

The values that underlie Canada's prized reputation have also been the driving force in persuading the international community to adopt Canada's "Responsibility to Protect" principle at the United Nations; an initiative that seeks to prevent humanitarian catastrophes. Other noteworthy aspects of Canada's foreign policy include aid and assistance to Iraq, Sudan and the Palestinian territories.

While Canada's foreign policy has been commendably developed within the framework of international human rights law, it has become apparent that its stated policies on the Middle East - Palestine and Israel in particular, are inconsistent with its actions.

The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations (NCCAR) calls on Canada to work with allies who also believe in multilateralism and respect for the rule of law. This will serve to protect those in need of protection, to assist those in need of assistance, and to ensure that respect, dignity and freedom is afforded to all.

Please note the following positions are also endorsed by the Canadian Arab Federation.

### PRESSING ISSUES

- **The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:** NCCAR maintains that United Nations Resolutions and other international legal treaties should be the basis for any resolution of the conflict. Israel is an occupying power that has for many decades violated international law, and deprived the Palestinian people of their inherent and legal rights.

Our position is that Canada is obligated to demand an immediate Israeli withdrawal of all occupied Arab territories, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights and give Palestinians rights over air space and port resources in Gaza following the withdrawal of illegal settlers and military outposts.

The latest Israeli strategy, to further occupy Palestinian land, has seen the construction of a separation wall deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice. Canada's reputation of being an honest broker was blemished when we abstained on UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/15, which demanded Israel respect the ICJ decision. Canada's silence allows Israel to continue to act with impunity and prolong the suffering and denial of the internationally recognized rights of the Palestinian people.

- **Iraq:** NCCAR commends the Canadian government for joining the international community and opposing the war in Iraq, which has been denounced by Kofi Annan as illegal. It is clear that the war was conducted on false pretences and could have been avoided if weapons inspectors and diplomacy were given a fair chance. The war has created a humanitarian disaster for the people of Iraq, with civilian casualties estimated at 100,000 and a countless number permanently maimed. It is evident that democracy cannot be instituted by force. Iraq will continue to need Canada's assistance in rebuilding efforts that will include: building a democratic and civil society model, humanitarian aid and the establishment of economic ties. For post-war Iraq, we advocate for an immediate Canadian humanitarian intervention. However, any other role Canada wishes and should play for the rebuilding of Iraq should be within the numerous United Nations avenues. A UN role is important for ensuring that the people of Iraq are the arbiters of their own destiny.
- **Sudan:** NCCAR applauds the leading role Canada has taken especially in post-war reconstruction and peace-building efforts. Canada and the international community should do all they can to promote stability, security and peace in Darfur.
- **Trade Relations:** NCCAR consistently advocates for a deliberate and aggressive trade policy in the region. We believe that the increase of Canadian corporate interest in the Arab world benefits both Canada and the region. Canadian companies have proven that they are good promoters of Canadian values abroad. The benefit to Canadians from the Arab world could be substantial. We have a comparative advantage in numerous areas that this developing region requires.

NCCAR encourages the work of the Canada-Arab Business Council ([www.canada-arabbusiness.org](http://www.canada-arabbusiness.org)) in promoting trade and investment between Canada and the region. We believe that current trade ([www.dfait.gc.ca/middle\\_east\\_dec-en.asp](http://www.dfait.gc.ca/middle_east_dec-en.asp)) pales in comparison to the potential that exists. We also encourage the development of free-trade agreements with capable nations such as Jordan, Morocco or the United Arab Emirates.

- **Development Aid**  
Many countries in the region require substantial development aid. As the Arab Human Development Report (<http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr>) commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) indicates, the Arab World requires reorganization and the rebuilding of structures and governance models, along with investments in human development. NCCAR believes that Canada can play a role since it represents a good model for governance, economic development, and multiculturalism. We believe that these models should be made available to Arab countries as part of Canada's international obligations. Therefore, NCCAR engages the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) regularly to discuss development aid to countries such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, and Yemen.

- **Relations with Arab Governments**

NCCAR maintains relationships with numerous Arab government representatives in Canada. These relations are based on respect for the opinion and views of others. We believe that only through constructive engagement can we make a difference in the world. Canada-Arab relations are at their highest point and we believe that NCCAR's presence on the federal scene and longstanding promotion of Canada in the Arab World has been very beneficial for the building, promoting and facilitating of these relations.

- **Human Rights**

Arab Governments' record on human rights is abysmal in certain cases. However, there is a substantial and quantitative improvement in the last decade—though nearly not enough.

NCCAR believes and advocates for the protection and promotion of human right values in the region. We constantly encourage Arab governments to apply international standards of human security. We also encourage the Canadian government to provide assistance to civil society actors, such as non-governmental organizations, working diligently to improve the lives of those living in the region.

- **Rights for Women**

NCCAR believes that granting full rights for Arab women is not only a moral and legal obligation but is also of benefit to the countries of the region. NCCAR consistently urges Arab governments to extend full rights and benefits to their female populations. We have also supported for many years the work of numerous NGOs working in gender-based advocacy. In certain cases, we have provided them with young Canadian professionals to work for them for six-month periods. We encourage Canada to increase support for such initiatives.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Canada must base its foreign policy positions and UN votes on the principles established under international human rights law and not bow to pressures to deviate from this position.
2. Canada must support the vision of the UN, and politically and financially support UN agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). They provide crucial humanitarian aid to refugees and have the expertise in handling conflicts.
  - a. Canada should support international human rights monitoring and peace-keeping missions to troubled regions.
3. Canada must enter negotiations with Israel to amend the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement to ban the import of products originating from the illegal settlements.
4. Canada should lead/organize an international conference on peace between Palestinians and Israelis.
5. Canada should work with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signatories to subject countries with nuclear capabilities to inspections and create a nuclear free zone in the Middle East.
6. A trade conference between Canada and the Arab world needs to be organized.

7. Need to create partnership between Canada and the League of Arab States (LAS) in capacity building and development in the region.
8. Increase bilateral relations between the LAS and Canada through exchanges and regular meetings.
9. Allocate more assistance for basic humanitarian aid and infrastructure development for Iraq.
10. Support international and Iraqi organizations in helping rebuild Iraqi civil society and call on the US government to expedite an exit strategy that will see stability in Iraq and an end to the occupation.

## **Backgrounders**

NCCAR has made available numerous background documents related to foreign policy towards the Arab world. Please visit the following web addresses for more information:

**<http://nccar.ca/publications/policy.html>**

- NCCAR Recommendations to the Government of Canada on the Palestine-Israel Conflict - Revised March 9, 2004
- Middle Eastern Issues
- Position on Iraq

**[http://nccar.ca/media\\_centre/point.html](http://nccar.ca/media_centre/point.html)**

- Position Paper on UN Resolutions (Produced by Canadians for Peace and Justice in the Middle East)
- Analysis of UN Resolutions (Produced by Canadians for Peace and Justice in the Middle East)
- Illegal Separation Wall (The "Apartheid" Wall)
- Impact of the Wall Factsheet
- House Demolitions Factsheet
- History of the Mid-East Conflict
- Democracy Factsheet
- Conventions Factsheet
- Air Canada
- Al-Jazeera
- Roadmap
- Historical Quotes That Have Undermined Palestinians
- Myths and Truths About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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