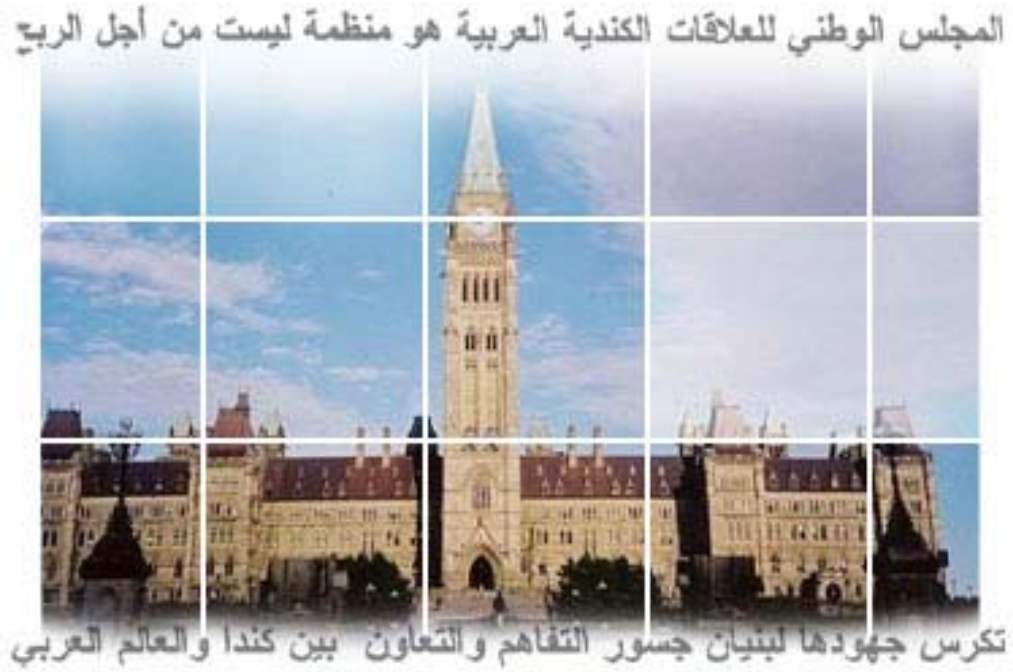


The National Council on
Canada-Arab Relations
NCCAR

ANNUAL REPORT
2005



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1.0 Executive Summary

Dear Members,

I am honoured to present to NCCAR members the 2005 annual report. I hope that it will meet your approval.

At 20 years of age, NCCAR reached a new milestone. Last year I informed you of the 20th Anniversary plans and this year, through our numerous activities, we exceeded those objectives. After hearing from you in 2005, we have set new goals for 2006 in line with your priorities and concerns.

This report is a reflection of the activities and events that NCCAR organized on behalf of its membership to improve Canada-Arab relations. We are taking on more strategic partnerships in Canada and the region and coordinating more activities with Arab community organizations.

In 2005, NCCAR met, on numerous occasions, with the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Paul Martin, to discuss Canada's role in the Arab world and the concerns of our membership about our foreign policy in the Middle East. We also met and consulted with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Pierre Pettigrew, to discuss the Canadian policy approach to the Arab region. Furthermore, we embarked with the Minister on a cross-Canada tour, starting in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and ending in British Columbia to provide him and Canadians the opportunity to discuss first hand their views on Canada's foreign policy.

NCCAR's financial well being was also improved in 2005. Through a series of fundraising events, increased membership and project delivery, NCCAR was able to change its bottom line. In 2006 we will undertake further activities directed at improving our financials which will allow us to hire the necessary staff to promote NCCAR's policy agenda in Canada.

The educational mandate of NCCAR is stronger than ever before. We are the leading Canadian organization in promoting internships with the Arab world, increasing the participation of Arab-Canadian youth in the political life of Canada through our parliamentary internship, and organizing conferences and workshops across the country on issues pertaining to Arab world foreign policy issues.

In the media, NCCAR has been repeatedly quoted on matters of importance to Canadians. Our board members, official spokespeople, and NCCAR's roster of experts have been very successful at promoting NCCAR policy. We continue to seek improved working relationships with the media. This year we started engaging them through a Heritage Canada funded project entitled *Through Canadian Eyes*. This funding allowed us to take a closer look at issues pertaining to the Arab-Canadian community and coverage in news media of Arab affairs. We will continue to do more of that in 2006.

This year we heard repeatedly from Canadians that NCCAR is an important organization that promotes a balanced and truly Canadian policy in the Arab region. We also heard that NCCAR needs to work more with like-minded organizations in Canada and abroad. We were told to increase our presence in the different regions of Canada. And this is what we will be working on in 2006.

I hope you will continue to join us in these efforts. I thank you for your commitment to these important issues.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mazen Chouaib". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mazen Chouaib
Executive Director



2.0 Mission

NCCAR was established in 1985 by Canadians who believe that our national interest is best served through expanded knowledge about the Arab world as well as social, scientific and educational exchanges.

2.1 NCCAR Objectives

NCCAR works with governments, the private sector and community organizations to promote and assist programs that increase Canadian awareness and knowledge about the Arab world, and to encourage the expansion of commercial, scientific, educational and cultural links between Canadian and Arab institutions.

2.2 NCCAR Fundamental Beliefs

NCCAR's objective is based on the following three beliefs:

1. Canada and the Arab world share aspirations for world peace
2. Canada and the Arab world have a common interest in increasing trade
3. Canada and the Arab world desire expanded cultural and educational ties

2.3 NCCAR Activities

- ❖ Promoting greater recognition of the social, economic, political and cultural contribution of Arab Canadians to Canada
- ❖ Providing information related to the Arab world to individuals, organizations, educational institutions, libraries, media, as well as Canadian provincial and federal governments
- ❖ Publishing a bi-weekly e-newsletter and a print journal (Arabica) highlighting our achievements, current political issues relating to Canada-Arab relations and the Arab-Canadian community, educational programs, as well as upcoming events
- ❖ Promoting speakers that provide information on the Arab world
- ❖ Sponsoring study tours between Canada and the Arab world
- ❖ Sponsoring and coordinating the NCCAR Parliamentary Internship Program for Arab-Canadian university students
- ❖ Coordinating the Young Professional International program for Canadian youth placed in Arab countries
- ❖ Coordinating parliamentary internships for Arab Canadian youth
- ❖ Connecting Arab Canadians to work collectively at the municipal, provincial and national levels
- ❖ Supporting cultural exhibitions between Canada and the Arab world

2.4 Board of Directors



Hussein M. Amery (President) is an international development professional specializing in project design and delivery in the developing world. Mr. Amery is the senior advisor for business development for the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) and the managing partner of Integrated Development Enterprise Associates (IDEA). He serves as senior technical advisor on a number of CIDA-and-World Bank-assisted projects and supports capacity-building activities at Canadian organizations and firms.

Formerly manager for Business Development with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), Mr. Amery has worked in more than thirty countries throughout Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and the Americas, and he has designed and implemented over 20 large-value projects. He is an international development professional and expert on Middle Eastern affairs. His deep knowledge of the area has been developed over the past fifteen years working in the field extensively, and in conjunction with donor agencies, the World Bank and United Nations organizations, such as UNRWA, UNDP and ESCWA, and as the current President of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations.

David Comerford (VP & Treasurer) With over 20 years of international development experience, Mr Comerford has worked for several Canadian and international NGOs including CBIE, UNAC, Oxfam-Quebec and CCIC. He has lived and studied for more than seven years in Egypt and Tunisia and has travelled extensively in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. He is currently the director of External Relations at CUSO, the largest cooperant-volunteer sending agency in Canada. Mr Comerford takes great interest in Canadian public and foreign policy.

Rsmeya Hammoud (Secretary) is a legal assistant at the Duncan & Company law firm in Calgary, Alberta. She works in the civil litigation branch and has extensive experience in various litigation areas. Rsmeya has served on a number of boards and is an active volunteer in Calgary. She enjoys being active in community affairs and takes an interest in various events to educate and promote community activities.

Sine Chadi is chairman of Imperial Equities Inc. and the company's chief executive officer. From day one, Mr. Chadi has been the principal driver of the company and has overseen all day-to-day aspects of Imperial's growth and development. He brings more than 20 years of professional experience in the real-estate sector to Imperial. He is also the founder and principal shareholder of North American Mortgage Corp., as well as of numerous other companies involved in the acquisition, redevelopment and disposition of real estate assets. Mr. Chadi also sat as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta from 1993 to 1997. He represented his caucus on a number of the Legislature's economic development, public accounts and treasury committees. In addition, Mr. Chadi is an active community leader and fundraiser for a number of community groups

including the Boys and Girls Clubs and Crystal Kids. He received the Honorary Chinese Citizen Award for his philanthropic work with the Asian community in Edmonton.

Bahija Réghaï has extensive experience in the area of human rights, community development, and intercultural training. She has worked and traveled extensively in Africa, Europe and North America. She brings in over twenty years of community and NGO experience. She is a vice-president and founding member of the Arab Canadian Women Association (ACWA) of Ottawa, first co-chair of Al-Awda-Canada, a member of the Advisory Council of the Across Boundaries Multifaith Institute (ABMI) Montreal, and president of the Coalition of Arab Professional and Community Associations (CAPCA) of Ottawa.

Dr. Ismail Zayid was born in 1933 in Beit Nuba, Palestine, and was educated in Jerusalem. He received a scholarship from the Jordanian government to study medicine at Guy's Hospital Medical School, University of London, England. Dr. Zayid graduated in 1958, and undertook specialty training in pathology at the Postgraduate Medical School, University of London. After a number of high-level appointments, he was appointed as chief of service, Division of Anatomical Pathology, Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre in Halifax from 1994 until his retirement in 1996. He has contributed extensively, both on a national and international level, in teaching and researching in the fields of Breast and Gynaecologic Pathology. In addition to his stellar medical career, Dr. Zayid has been an activist for the Palestinian and Arab cause. He has published two books and many articles on the issue. Since 1978, he has served as president of the Canada Palestine Association and, since 1982, as president of the Arab Canadian Association of the Atlantic Provinces. He has also served on the NECEF board and played an active role in the Canadian Arab Federation.

Michel de Salaberry is a former Canadian Ambassador to Egypt, Iran and Jordan. Former Deputy Director, Middle East Division; Chief of Staff to the Minister for Constitutional Affairs; and Director, Middle East Relations Division at Foreign Affairs Canada (formerly DFAIT). He is currently a free agent since leaving the Foreign Service in January 2005 and is on the board of directors for IMPACS (an NGO that supports civil society and independent media in Canada); L'Arche communities of the mentally challenged in both Gatineau and Bethlehem-Azzarieh; Al Shehab Community Centre in the Cairo periphery; and the New Day Foundation for intercultural dialogue between Toronto, Canada and Tehran, Iran.

Dany Assaf is a lawyer in Toronto with wide expertise in business law. He served as an advisor to NCCAR and a number of Canadian organizations with national and international focus.

Hasan Al-Shawa is President & CEO of Shawa Enterprises Canada, a Montreal-based private investment group. He currently sits on the board of directors of several North American, European, and Middle Eastern companies, trusts, and organizations. Hasan has accumulated 20 years of experience in business development and real estate in the Middle East and North America. He is active

in the community as the President of the Abu-Baker S. Al-Shawa Charitable Foundation; member of the Canadian Arab Federation; on the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Palestinian Foundation; board member for the Social Network for Arab Professionals; and board member for the Arab World Festival.

2.5 Staff

Mazen Chouaib: Executive Director

Ian Watson: Senior Advisor

Maisa Tohme, Kristina Roic & Remie El-Kara: Administrative Assistants

Annik Lussier: Communications and Projects Manager

Essam Farag: Special Projects Coordinator

Sergey Gruzdev: Community Relations Assistant

3.0 Programs

A) Young Professionals International

NCCAR selected 11 young Canadians interested in gaining professional experience in the Middle East for its Young Professionals International (YPI) program, under the auspices of Foreign Affairs Canada and the government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy.

YPI gives Canadian youth a first paid, career-related, international work experience through 6-12 months placements in some 115 countries in all regions of the world. It is part of the Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy.

This is the seventh year NCCAR has been organizing these internships. NCCAR YPI placements are exciting and are excellent learning opportunities for career development. The Council's wide network of contacts has facilitated the creation of new placements in prestigious organizations. The following is a list of the organizations hosting our participants in 2005-2006.

- ❖ **The Daily Star (Newspaper)**
Beirut, Lebanon
Intern: Spencer Osberg
- ❖ **Parliament of Lebanon, UNDP Project**
Beirut, Lebanon
Intern: Ali Sayed-Ali
- ❖ **Africa Middle East Refugee Assistance (NGO)**
Cairo, Egypt
Intern: Sarah Stanton
- ❖ **Egypt Today (Magazine)**
Cairo, Egypt

- Intern:** Michael Ayyash
- ❖ **La Revue d'Égypte (Magazine)**
Cairo, Egypt
Intern : Nicolas Asselin
 - ❖ **Jordan Times (Magazine)**
Amman, Jordan
Intern: Sheila Dabu
 - ❖ **Cairo Magazine/Egypt Today**
Cairo, Egypt
Intern: Kristina Roic
 - ❖ **Al Ahram Weekly (Newspaper)**
Cairo, Egypt
Intern: Hisham Safieddine
 - ❖ **Maroc Soir/Madinati (Newspaper/Magazine)**
Casablanca, Morocco
Intern: Josianne Bertrand
 - ❖ **Réalités (Magazine)**
Tunis, Tunisia
Intern: Mélanie Parent-Couturier
 - ❖ **League of Arab States**
Cairo, Egypt
Intern: Leila Bdeir

"The best aspect of my time abroad was being able travel to the Middle East, to experience a different culture and to work as a "real reporter" in a national newspaper. In the same token, this was also what made it the most challenging, but what I learned about handling different kinds of pressures (both work-related and cultural adjustment) and also the things I learned about myself (my limits and also capabilities) was worth the experience here." – Sheila Dabu, Jordan Times

NCCAR'S partner organizations also benefit from this program and continue to be receptive to hosting highly qualified Canadian youth of all backgrounds. What's more, the participants return to Canada with a clearer view of the region and share their experiences in their communities.

B) Youth Parliamentary Internship Program

An important component of NCCAR's Educational Program is the Parliamentary Internship Program. Since 1996, the Council has facilitated a six-week placement from May to June with a Member of Parliament for 16 young Canadians of Arab origin enrolled in a Canadian post-secondary institution. The program is meant to encourage young Arab-Canadians to participate in the Canadian political process. The 2005 participants were:

- ❖ **Office of Jim Prentice, MP (Conservative-Calgary Centre North)**
Participant: Omar Soliman, Political Science, University of Toronto
- ❖ **Office of Pierre Paquette, MP (Bloc Québécois-Joliette)**
Participant: Youcef Soufi, Political Studies & History, University of Manitoba
- ❖ **Office of Alexa McDonough, MP (NDP-Halifax)**
Participant: Natalie El-Hage, Sciences politiques, Université de Montréal
- ❖ **Office of Colleen Beaumier, MP (Liberal-London Fanshaw)**
Participant: Leila Daoud, History & Political Science, University of Alberta

“My internship with NCCAR has given me unparalleled networking opportunities. Thanks to the meetings NCCAR setup, I have been able to meet with a wide array of people ranging from members of the diplomatic corps to influential members of the Arab community. I was also able to further my skills by meeting, guiding, and liaising with dignitaries from around the world. It is my earnest hope that these experiences combined with many new skills will move beyond benefiting me as an individual and will extend into benefiting the Arab and Canadian community.”— Leila Daoud

NCCAR recognizes the importance of participation by the Arab-Canadian community in the political process by creating solid ties with members of Parliament and staff. Programs such as these will also ensure a legacy of Arab-Canadian involvement in political affairs at the federal level.

C) Through Canadian Eyes: The Arab World, Arab Canadians and the Media

The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations (NCCAR) launched a new national project to examine media coverage of conflicts in the Arab world and its impact on Arab Canadians. The 8-month project will also attempt to identify the views of Arab Canadians on inter-Arab conflicts. *Through Canadian Eyes: The Arab World, Arab Canadians and the Media* is fully funded by Canadian Heritage and strives to better involve Arab immigrants in Canadian society.



In response to a desire from the Arab-Canadian community to explore these topics, NCCAR is conducting research to examine what kind of effects coverage of Arab conflicts by Canadian news media outlets have had on the country's Arab communities, help better understand the impact of inter-Arab tensions on the limited participation of these groups in Canadian society, and examine how Arab immigrants from areas

where inter-Arab conflicts exist and interact with each other.

NCCAR has been working with Arab-Canadian community leaders to discuss the effect of the media on their communities and suggest strategies to help alleviate any existing tensions and foster collaboration within Canada's Arab population.

NCCAR also organized roundtable discussions with Canadian media organizations throughout the country this year that will be continuing until March 2006, with the goal of achieving a more comprehensive and balanced coverage of foreign conflicts and encouraging Arab Canadians to ask questions to journalists, editors and producers to better understand the news-making process. This year, community dialogue and media education sessions were held in Ottawa and Montreal in November and December respectively. In 2006, similar sessions will be held in Toronto, Halifax, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.



This project will result in the production of both a *Media Tool Kit* and *Conflict Resolution Kit* to be distributed to media outlets and Arab-Canadian organizations due to be produced by June 2006. A dedicated online location for the project has been created with all the project information at www.nccar.ca/canadianeyes.

D) Journalism Apprenticeships

Every year, NCCAR takes on students from Carleton University's journalism program to offer them a glimpse into media efforts aimed at improving Canada-Arab relations. The interns help write news releases, contact media and helps write articles for the newsletter during their two-week stay. In 2005, NCCAR coordinated to take on three students. They were Sagal Ali, Melanie Sharpe and Erika Paulson.

E) Speakers' Bureau

2005 Speakers' Bureau activities have been successful in bringing high-profile speakers to Canada to discuss Arab world issues and help educate Canadians as well as government officials. Speakers habitually give public lectures, take part in media interviews and meet with Foreign Affairs Canada, members of Parliament, Privy Council Office (PCO) officials, members of the Middle East Discussion Group, as well as with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) managers. Through our wide network of contacts, NCCAR arranges these meetings and coordinates with other organizations to prepare their itineraries.

This year, NCCAR hosted and organized events for Mr. David Nasser of the Arab American Institute (AAI) in January, Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) in February, Mr. Terry Rempel, senior research at BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights in May, and Prof. Jeff Halper, Coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), Professor of Anthropology at Ben Gurion University in October and Mrs. Karen AbuZayd, UNRWA Commissioner-General also in October.



F) Community Development

NCCAR's community development program is an important component of our educational programs. This year we hosted meetings in Montreal in January and June to provide community members with information on the Canadian political system. The event was organized by Sowers of Hope. Mazen Chouaib spoke with about 40 people to provide an overview of party stances on Mid-East policy, how Foreign Affairs Canada works, and what Canadians can do to influence politicians. This outreach program is one that we are working on building through a project with the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF).

In December 2005, NCCAR received funding from the **Ontario Trillium Foundation** to focus on creating links between Arab organizations in the Ottawa region, in order to improve communications, understanding, and create a better social climate. This project is geared to create a more active and inclusive Arab community of diverse origins and better understanding of Canadian society by fostering the development of local initiatives. Meetings will be arranged for Arab organizations in the Ottawa region to work towards more cooperation and collaboration.

G) Volunteers

Every year, NCCAR works with a number of volunteers who donate their time and energy in support of our mission. This year we received a large number of volunteers who worked in administrative support, policy research, coordinating conferences, and organizing meetings with government officials and parliamentarians. We are most grateful for their efforts and dedication. Our volunteer program also serves to educate the volunteers about NCCAR's activities and raise awareness about Canadian foreign policy and media issues. Thank you to Bachir El-Saghir, Talar Istanbulian, Maha Mankal, Mohamed Ramadan, Jeff Monaghan, and Hanna Salama.

4.0 Media Bureau

NCCAR efforts at becoming a clearing house of information is recognized by the increased reliance of Canadian and international media on our Bureau. Over the year, we have been pro-active in promoting NCCAR's point of view through publishing opinion pieces, organizing interviews for experts, responding to media calls, and publishing news releases. The following is but a small list of the work of the Media Bureau:

4.1 Published works

- ❖ July 20, 2005 – Embassy Magazine - *After London Attacks, Still More Pressure On Muslims To 'Display Their Loyalty'* By Mazen Chouaib, Executive Director
- ❖ September 14, 2005 – Embassy Magazine – *Sharia Opponents Did Nothing to Increase Understanding of Islam*, By Mazen Chouaib, Executive Director.

- ❖ October 12, 2005 – Embassy Magazine – *Israel Still Very Much in Gaza*, By Annik Lussier, Communications Coordinator

4.2 Media Interviews

NCCAR board members and staff were widely quoted on numerous issues such as a shift in Canada's foreign policy with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the war and occupation in Iraq, Canada's foreign policy shift, among other issues. These comments and interviews appeared at the national level in the *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *Canadian Press*, *Presse Canadienne*, and *Macleans*. NCCAR was prominent in many local publications including the *Calgary Herald*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Edmonton Sun*, *Embassy*, *Guelph Mercury*, *Hill Times*, *Hour.ca*, *Le Droit*, *London Free Press*, *Montreal Gazette*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Sudbury Star*, *Toronto Star*, *Toronto Sun*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Windsor Star*, and *Winnipeg Sun*, among others.

NCCAR's staff and board members were also very much present in local and national broadcast media with interviews for radio and television. Some of the national media outlets included CBC-NewsWorld, Radio-Canada, RCI, CTV, and CPAC. The cities covered included Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver.

Arab-Canadian media, such as *Al Mashriq*, *Arab News of Calgary*, and *Sada Al-Mashrek*, have covered NCCAR events such as the *Through Canadian Eyes: Arab World, Arab Canadians and the Media* project sessions held this year in both Ottawa and Montreal.

International media outlets such as *Al-Ahram* (Egypt), *Al-Jazeera* (Qatar) and *Reuters* (UK) have also quoted NCCAR spokespeople.

We are working to expand our presence in French-language media and will strive to expand our network of spokespeople to ensure that more local media throughout Canada become aware of issues important to NCCAR.

NCCAR also facilitates meetings with the media for experts and representatives of other organizations. We are regularly asked to identify experts, community members, and Arabs in the region for national and international media. NCCAR also works with Canadian reporters working in the Arab region to identify regional experts.

4.3 News Releases

The following is a sample of some of the 20 communiqués that NCCAR issued this year to raise awareness about foreign policy, media coverage issues, and major news stories:

December 9, 2005 [English / Arabic]

The Arab and Muslim Communities of Canada for the Immediate Release of Hostages in Iraq

November 28, 2005 [English / Français]

NCCAR Welcomes Plans to Establish Canada Centre for Peace and Democracy and Applauds Canada's Commitment to the Arab World/ Le Conseil national des relations canado-arabes salue l'annonce de l'établissement d'un Centre canadien pour la paix et la démocratie et félicite le Canada de son engagement envers le monde arabe

September 15, 2005

NCCAR Welcomes Additional \$24.5 Million in Canadian Aid to Palestinians

September 14, 2005

Arab- and Muslim-Canadian Groups Deeply Concerned Over CSIS Practices

August 17, 2005

NCCAR Welcomes Israeli Retreat from Occupied Gaza as First Step; Calls on Canada to Aid Palestinians

August 16, 2005

NCCAR Offers Condolences on Death of Canadian Zaid Meerwali in Iraq; Condemns Attacks Targeting Civilians

July 8, 2005 [English / Français]

NCCAR Welcomes G8 Aid Package to Palestinians/Le CNRCA accueille l'annonce du G8 d'une aide aux Palestiniens

May 27, 2005 [English / Français]

NCCAR Encouraged by Canada's Commitment to Palestinians/Le CNRCA encouragé par l'appui offert par le Canada aux palestiniens

May 27, 2005

NCCAR Welcomes Canada's Renewed Commitment to Sudan Peacekeeping Forces

February 15, 2005

NCCAR Condemns Attack on Ex-PM Hariri

February 8, 2005 [English / Français]

NCCAR Welcomes Truce in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Encourages Canada to Host Peace Conference/Le CNRCA encouragé par la trêve dans le conflit israélo-palestinien; propose que le Canada tienne une conférence sur la paix

January 31, 2005

NCCAR Congratulates Iraqis on Elections

4.4 E-ArabiCa Bi-weekly Newsletter

NCCAR activities and events are publicized in a bi-weekly newsletter that is

distributed by email to members, government officials as well as other parties interested in our work. The Council's meetings with parliamentarians, Foreign Affairs officials, NGOs and members of the Arab-Canadian community are included. In addition, E-ArabiCa informs our readers of House of Commons debates, FAC programs, policy issues, media monitoring as well as cultural and educational activities.

4.5 ArabiCa Quarterly Newsletter

ArabiCa is the tool NCCAR uses to promote our activities amongst our membership and with government officials. It is a well-designed glossy paper document published four times a year. It includes NCCAR's main activities and serves to announce upcoming activities. We publish and distribute over 1500 copies on a quarterly basis to government, parliamentarians, NGOs, members and other interested groups and individuals.

5.0 Government Relations

5.1 Prime Minister of Canada

On March 7, 2005, NCCAR and CAF held a meeting with the Right Honourable Prime Minister Paul Martin in Ottawa. The meeting was part of what has become regular consultation with the Prime Minister. It provided an opportunity to contribute to the Canadian government's domestic and foreign policy development and application, as well as voice concern on a number of issues raised by communities in Canada.



The meeting was lengthy, characterized as open, honest and productive. NCCAR and CAF stressed the importance of fair and inclusive domestic and foreign policies, underpinned by the judicial process accompanied by principled policies governed by international law. Items discussed included the following:

- ❖ Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East
- ❖ Enhanced public participation for Arab Canadians in Canadian institutions
- ❖ Immigration and refugee issues, especially those relating to the plight of Palestinian refugees in Canada
- ❖ The concern over public security and the role that Arab community can play especially since it is the recipient of much of the scrutiny.

Then discussion revolved about the situation in Iraq and the need for Canadian support of the political process, as well as dealing with humanitarian concerns. The current events in Lebanon were discussed and the need for Canada's

support for the will of the people of Lebanon, and those of the region. Most importantly a discussion of Canada's role in the Middle East peace process focused on the importance of this role and Canada's desire to engage in assisting both Palestinian and Israelis in their search for peace, and to provide all necessary assistance for the rebuilding of Palestinian institutions and capacities.

The meeting was concluded with several action items and commitments for follow-up. The Prime Minister indicated Canada's support for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and Canada's intention to support efforts to building Palestinian institutions, with a clear desire to make an impact. He also noted Canada's support for Iraqi reconstruction, albeit in neighbouring countries, without deploying Canadians to Iraq.

In December 2005, NCCAR organized a meeting with the Prime Minister in Ottawa. The meeting was also attended by the Hon. Joseph Fontana. The issues that were discussed revolved around the following points:

- ❖ Views of the community on the election
- ❖ Canada's policy in the Middle East – including the Israel-Palestinian conflict and Iraq
- ❖ Relations with Arab countries
- ❖ Greater participation by Arab Canadians in political system
- ❖ Canadian foreign policy

5.2 Minister of Foreign Affairs

In 2005, the Council held regular meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (The Honourable Pierre Pettigrew) to discuss the issues of Canadian policy in the Arab region, the Israeli-Palestinian question, trade with the region, and the apparent shift in Canadian policy in favour of Israel at the expense of international law. The meetings were held in Edmonton, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver to engage the various Arab-Canadian communities throughout the country.



5.3 Official Opposition Leader

NCCAR met with the Honourable Mr. Stephen Harper, the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to establish a relationship and discuss some of the concerns and provides advice on foreign policy positions of the Conservative Party. NCCAR and CAF introduced Mr Harper to our membership and to members of the Arab-Canadian community, along with over 30 Conservative MPs including Mr Stockwell Day, at a hospitality suite at the Conservative Party Convention held in Montreal on March 19.

5.4 Foreign Affairs Canada and International Trade Canada

NCCAR meets regularly with officials at Foreign Affairs Canada to advocate the views expressed in our policy papers. As well, we facilitate meetings with members of the community, experts, and organizations concerned about issues of foreign policy towards the Arab world. Furthermore, NCCAR held meetings with members of International Trade Canada to discuss how Canada can implement its commitments to increased business relations with Arab countries as was outlined in the government's International Policy Statement released in April. The important role that the Canada-Arab Business Council (CABC) plays is regularly promoted.

5.5 Meetings/Events

5.5.1 Conservative Party Convention Reception

On March 19, NCCAR and the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) organized a hospitality suite reception at the Conservative Party of Canada Convention in Montreal. The objective of the reception was to introduce the Conservative Party to the Arab community. The Honourable Stephen Harper, Conservative Party leader, along with over 20 Conservative Members of Parliament and Senators turned out to meet with members of the Arab community.

5.5.2 Hon. Dalton McGuinty Dinner

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, was hosted by NCCAR for a dinner in Toronto on March 31. Mr. McGuinty discussed politics, trade, business and social issues that relate to Ontario's relationship with countries of the Arab world.

5.5.3 Foreign Affairs Conservative Party Critic

NCCAR's Executive Director, Mazen Chouaib, held a meeting with Mr. Stockwell Day, foreign affairs critic for the Conservative Party, on March 23 to discuss the policy position of his party vis-à-vis the Middle East. There was an agreement made to continue the dialogue and to expand the discussion through open forums to involve members of the Arab-Canadian community. NCCAR emphasized its commitment in promoting and expanding the dialogue between the Conservative Party and the community.

5.5.4 Meeting with Bloc Quebecois MP, Pierre Paquette

On March 22, NCCAR met with Mr Paquette, Bloc Quebecois MP for Joliette, Quebec, to discuss a private member's bill (C-326) he submitted asking the government to amend the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement to force Israel to label products from the illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories coming to Canada. This would make banning these products a simpler task. This has been a consistent demand NCCAR has been pushing the Canadian Government to act upon. NCCAR has been requesting that the government change portions of the agreement because it stands in clear violation of Canadian foreign policy pertaining to the Middle East, which is enshrined in international law and specific on not accepting Israeli sovereignty over occupied territories, and the settlements. It is important to note that in the International Policy Statement released in 2005, there is a clear reference to the issue of

settlement products as a concern for Canada. This is clearly a testament to the collective efforts of those concerned about Canada's obligations and interests in the world.

5.5.5 Canadian Peace Process Coordinator

Leaders and members of Ottawa's Palestinian-Canadian community met with Ms. Jill Sinclair, the Canadian Representative for the Middle East Peace Process and the current gavel holder of the Palestinian Refugee Working Group several times this year in Ottawa and Montreal. The meetings concentrated on the role of Canada in the region, refugee issues, and other initiatives undertaken in the region to move the peace process forward. Ms. Sinclair encouraged the community to play a constructive role by strengthening the links between the Canadian Palestinian and Arab communities with the Palestinians to further support Canada's peace efforts.

5.5.6 Meeting with Director of Public Policy

In June, a preliminary meeting with the Director of Public Policy at Foreign Affairs was held to discuss potential partnership with NCCAR in promoting Canadian values and increasing visibility in the Middle East. This is a new initiative that received considerable focus in the International Policy Statement recently introduced by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Over the last number of years, NCCAR and the Canadian Arab Federations have been working towards promoting Canadians of Arab origin for public appointment. Most recently, two Arab Canadians were appointed to public office: Mr. Larry Shaben of Alberta (former provincial minister and NCCAR board member) was appointed as an immigration judge, and Mrs. Naïma Bendris of Montreal was appointed to the board of directors for the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

6.0 Partnerships/Coalitions

6.1 Canadian Arab Federation

This year, NCCAR held many meetings with the president and members of the Canadian Arab Federation board of directors. As a result of these meetings, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two organizations, clarifying roles, emphasizing the need for greater communication and dialogue as well as promoting cooperative activities and projects.

As part of collaborative efforts, NCCAR co-sponsored an evening reception on Parliament Hill with the Canadian Arab Federation. More than 200 Canadian-Arab leaders and Canadian politicians attended, including Prime Minister Paul Martin, NDP Leader Jack Layton, Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe, Conservative Party Leader Stephen Harper, and more than 60 parliamentarians. The Prime Minister and the three other opposition leaders delivered speeches highlighting the important issues of the Canadian Arab community in Canada. This civic engagement gave



80 volunteers from at least seven different cities including Montreal, Laval, Toronto, Mississauga, Windsor, and Ottawa an opportunity to meet with over 60 Ministers and Members of Parliament. The delegates, trained in advocacy techniques, discussed three key position papers that expressed the community's concerns over the direction of Canada's National Security, Immigration and Foreign Policy.

Both NCCAR and CAF were involved in the production of the 2006 Elections Guide to educate their respective membership and the public at large on the elections system and positions of the different parties for the January 23, 2006 federal election.

6.2 Middle East Working Group

MEWG is a coalition of Canadian non-governmental organizations, labour unions and churches. Some members include Care Canada, World Vision, ACCC, Kairos and the Mennonite Central Committee. This year, the group met twice to discuss Canada's role in the Middle East. The second meeting was held with the minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss Canada's shifting policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to express their concerns over the impact of Canada's position in the world.

6.3 Tsunami Relief for Asia

In January, NCCAR promoted relief for the victims of the Tsunami in Asia in cooperation with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and World Vision Canada. All NCCAR members were encouraged to give generously to this global call for help from the affected regions.

6.4 Conference on Responsible Investment in Israel

A coalition of church-related organizations, Jewish and Muslim groups as well as non-governmental organizations working for a just peace organized an international conference from October 26-29 in Toronto entitled "*A Call for Morally Responsible Investment: A Nonviolent Response to the Israeli Occupation.*" The conference was hosted by Canadian Friends of Sabeel and co-sponsored by several other organizations including NCCAR. In addition to 15 internationally recognized speakers, the conference included discussions, question periods, small group workshops, non-denominational theological reflection, and networking.

7.0 Cultural Activities & Exchanges

7.1 Iraqi Women NGO Team

NCCAR held a meeting with a delegation of Iraqi women representing NGO organizations, during their training meetings in Canada. The Iraqi women's delegation represented a variety of NGOs working on women's issues in Iraq. Their visit to Canada was part of a two-week internship program funded by Canada, which seeks to expose them to British and Canadian programs that apply a gender policy framework. Furthermore, the visit offered them an opportunity to share their experiences with Canadians working on gender issues

on several levels: civil society, government and political. The Canadian portion of this internship program was coordinated by CIDA and Foreign Affairs Canada, with the assistance of Alternatives, a Montreal-based NGO that is active in civil society capacity building programs in Iraq.

7.2 Study Tour for Arab NGOs

NCCAR participated in a study tour of Canada for Arab NGOs, along with other Canadian NGOs including the Forum of Federation, the Parliamentary Centre, and the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee. NCCAR Executive Director Mazen Chouaib made a presentation on the role of NGOs in parliamentary democracy and the importance of applying public relations tools to the work of NGOs. The group included human rights activists from Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Oman, and Egypt.



8.0 Arab Embassies and Visiting Dignitaries

8.1 Farewell Events in Honour of Saudi Ambassador

The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations (NCCAR) hosted two farewell dinner events for His Excellency Ambassador Mohamad Raja Al-Husseini, Dean of Arab Ambassadors to Canada, and Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They were held in Calgary and Ottawa on June 9 and June 22 respectively. They were attended by senators, members of the House of Commons, a large number of business groups with interests in the region, and Arab community members. The events represented a unique opportunity to discuss politics, trade, and other issues. One of the dinner events was co-hosted by the General Union of Egyptian Abroad and the Arab Canadian Cultural & Media Centre.

8.2 Meeting with Palestinian Chief Justice Mubarak

NCCAR board members met with Palestinian Chief Justice Assad Mubarak while he undertook an educational mission in Canada organized by University of Windsor's Prof. Reem Bahdi. The visit was part of the Legislative Reform program, a cooperation project between Beir Zeit and Windsor Universities.

9.0 Annual Dinner

NCCAR's Annual Dinner on January 31, 2006 was a success with approximately 150 people attending. It marked the 20th Anniversary for NCCAR. Many distinguished guests were in attendance. Amongst those present were three of NCCAR's founders, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, Rev. Father Gabriel and Mr. Ian Watson, former MP in Quebec. Several



ambassadors and embassy representatives, senators, MPs, Foreign Affairs officials, business people, members, supporters and volunteers were present. At the dinner, blessings were given by His Eminence Sheikh Ali Sobayti of Al-Hidaya Association in Montreal. The event was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ottawa in the beautiful Pinnacle Room. This year's keynote address was given by Mr. Dwain Lingenfelter, Chairman of the Canada-Arab Business Council and VP Government Relations of Nexen. In his speech, Mr. Lingenfelter spoke of the importance of increasing business and trade relations between Canada and countries in the Arab world.

NCCAR awarded the Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing) with the *Award for Lifetime Service in Advancing Canada-Arab Relations* for his tireless effort to promote improved diplomatic, political, development and trade between relations between Canada and the Arab World—some examples include the mobilization of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to begin working in Jordan, initiating the creation of a Palestine Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and undertaking similar large-scale efforts in Algeria and Lebanon.

The first Young Leader of the Future award was given to Mr. Rabie Masri for his work with the Coalition Against the Deportation of Palestinian Refugees in assisting refugees in Canada and advocating for their rights. Dinner guests also heard from a young Palestinian refugee Youssef El Loubani about his family's harrowing experience in refugee camps.

10.0 Planned Events

NCCAR is planning a number of events, combined with our regular activities for 2006. We look forward to your participation in these events and others proposed throughout the year.

Date	Activity	City	Comments
January 11	Community Dialogue & Media sessions	Toronto	<u>Confirmed</u>
January 25	Community Dialogue & Media sessions	Halifax	<u>Confirmed</u>
February 6	Community Dialogue & Media sessions	Edmonton	<u>Confirmed</u>
February 8	Community Dialogue & Media sessions	Calgary	<u>Confirmed</u>
March 13	Community Dialogue & Media sessions	Vancouver	<u>Confirmed</u>
April 11	Dignitary Visit: Ahmad Tibi	Ottawa	<u>Confirmed</u>
April 22	Dignitary Visit: Dinner with Hanan Ashrawi	Montreal	<u>Confirmed</u>
May-June	NCCAR Parliamentary Internships	Ottawa	<u>Confirmed</u>
June	Speaker Visit: Robert Fisk	Ottawa	<u>Pending confirmation</u>
September	International Internships (YPI)	Various Arab countries	<u>Confirmed</u>
December	Annual Dinner	Ottawa	<u>Pending confirmation</u>