



CPCCA

Coalition parlementaire canadienne
de lutte contre l'antisémitisme

Canadian Parliamentary Coalition
to Combat Antisemitism

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Scott Reid & Mario Silva announce launch of all-party Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism

(Ottawa – June 2nd, 2009)

Scott Reid (MP, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox & Addington) and Mario Silva (MP, Davenport) today announced the formation of Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism (CPCCA). The new group is made up of 21 members of parliament from all parties in the House of Commons.

The coalition will conduct a national inquiry into antisemitism in Canada.

Silva and Reid extended an invitation for written submissions. Any individual or group is invited to put forward a written submission of up to 2000 words, no later than October 1st, 2009.

Reid and Silva also announced that hearings will be held in the autumn of 2009, to gather oral testimony on the extent of Canadian anti-Semitism and on potential solutions. The CPCCA will make a public report of its findings no later than Spring 2010.

“Canada is founded on a set of shared values, and antisemitism is an affront to those values,” said Reid. “It is the oldest and most persistent form of hate, and the template upon which so many other forms of hatred are based. Today’s announcement is intended to signal that in this country, legislators of all parties are deeply concerned about what seems to be a rising international tide of renewed antisemitism, on a scale not seen in my lifetime.”

“This inquiry is an important undertaking,” said Silva “Canadian lawmakers from all political parties are coming together, in the excellent model provided by the United Kingdom, to define, examine, cast light upon and finally dispel this persistent form of discrimination. Over the course of the coming inquiry, we look forward to hearing from a wide range of groups, to the end of a comprehensive understanding of anti-Semitism here in Canada, and abroad.”

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Background

In February 2009, parliamentarians from around the world gathered in London for the inaugural conference of the Interparliamentary Committee for Combating Antisemitism. The conference brought together over 125 international delegates for two days of presentations and discussions on the increasing problem of antisemitism globally. The conference produced a resolution “The London Declaration for Combating Antisemitism” calling on all governments to face the problem of antisemitism, especially its manifestations in the media and academia. Under the leadership of Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, and International Steering Committee Member Professor Irwin Cotler, a delegation of 11 Canadian Members of Parliament attended the conference in London. They returned with the desire to form a Canadian coalition to fight antisemitism here.

Antisemitism is not a new problem, however recorded incidents of antisemitism have been on the rise both locally and globally. Furthermore, the problem is now being manifested in ways never experienced before. While accusations of blood libel, or petty vandalism are still issues for the Jewish community, new fears have arisen especially for those who support the State of Israel. On campuses specifically, Jewish students are being threatened and intimidated to the point that they are not able to express themselves, or are even fearful to wear a Jewish skull cap or star around their necks. Antisemitism represents a break from Canadian values, which promote the rights of all individuals to practice their religion, educate themselves, and express themselves with security and freedom.

The new committee, the CPCCA (Canadian Parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism) brings together 21 MPs from all parties in the House of Commons for the stated purpose of confronting and combating antisemitism in Canada today. The group is broken into 2 sub-committees; the Steering Committee (chaired by MP Scott Reid) which will direct the and the Inquiry Panel (chaired by MP Mario Silva) which will review written and oral testimony and produce a report on the state of antisemitism in Canada to the government in the Spring of 2010.

The Inquiry was launched on June 2nd, with an open call for written submissions by the Canadian public. Any person or organization is invited to submit a paper of up to 2000 words to be reviewed by the committee. Submissions will be taken in English or in French, and then looked at by the various members of the Inquiry Panel. Based on these submissions, the committee will invite witnesses to testify at a series of public hearings. At the conclusion of the hearings, the committee will produce a report to the Government of Canada, and anticipates that the Government will respond to it by the spring of 2010.

The CPCCA is unaffiliated with the Government of Canada, or any NGO’s or advocacy groups. It is associated with the Interparliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism, an international steering committee which organized the conference in London in 2009.

Mandate of the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism

Mission

The CPCCA is a coalition of concerned parliamentarians aiming to confront and combat the global resurgence of Antisemitism. It recognizes that Antisemitism by its nature is fundamentally opposed to the multicultural identity of Canada and to the Canadian values of Human Rights and Human Dignity. It harnesses the goodwill of parliamentarians in all parties, in both Houses of the Parliament of Canada, in the struggle against this oldest and most enduring of hatreds.

Vision

The CPCCA is an all-party Parliamentary group which will remain independent of both the Government of Canada and NGOs or Advocacy Groups. Committee membership is restricted to current Members of Parliament. It aims to undertake two primary objectives:

1. To conduct an Inquiry into Antisemitism in Canada, with the following as its terms of reference:
 - *To identify and define the nature of Antisemitism in Canada today.*
 - *To analyze, as far as evidence allows, the extent of the problem.*
 - *To make practical recommendations as to how the problem can be addressed.*

As such, the committee will independently review evidence, hear witnesses, and attend briefings from a variety of sources. It will then publish a report based on its findings and present it to the Government of Canada for response.

2. If asked, to coordinate and host the Second Annual Inter-parliamentary Conference to Combat Antisemitism to be held in Canada in 2010. The conference will gather parliamentarians from around the world interested in fighting Antisemitism. It will focus on Antisemitism as a modern issue and will build upon the foundations and recommendations of the February 2009 London Declaration passed at the first conference of the Inter-parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism.

Frequently Asked Questions

On what is the CPCCA based?

- The CPCCA emerged from the London Conference to Combating Antisemitism which was the first event of its kind to gather international parliamentarians for the purpose of developing a collaborative response to an international conference.
- The Conference resulted in the London Declaration, which among other things called upon *“national governments, parliaments, international institutions, political and civic leaders, NGOs, and civil society to affirm democratic and human values, build societies based on respect and citizenship and combat any manifestations of antisemitism and discrimination.”*
- The Conference was organized by the Interparliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism, and the UK based Parliamentary Coalition Against Antisemitism. The structure and function of the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism is based on the UK model.
- More information can be obtained at www.thepcaa.org & www.antisem.org

Why is it necessary for Canada to conduct an inquiry into antisemitism?

- The extent and severity of antisemitism is widely regarded as at its worst level since the end of the Second World War.
- The problem is increasingly widespread affecting societies and individuals around the world.
- Antisemitism is being manifested in a manner which has never been dealt with before.
- It is key that we gain insight into the problem of antisemitism locally, before we convene and find solutions globally.

What is the ‘new antisemitism’?

- Antisemitism is an age-old phenomenon, yet it is always re-invented and manifested in different ways. For example, while accusations of blood libel are still being made against the Jewish people, instead they are being directed against the State of Israel, such that anti-Zionism is being used as a cover for antisemitism.
- This problem is especially prevalent on campuses where Jewish students are ridiculed and intimidated for any deemed support for the “Nazi” and “apartheid” State of Israel, which is claimed to have no right to exist.
- The problem is also exemplified by individuals and governments who call for the destruction of the State of Israel and its inhabitants.

Is the Canadian Parliamentary Committee for Combating Antisemitism really about limiting legitimate criticism of the State of Israel?

- No. The issue of antisemitism is a domestic and international human rights issue that affects people and states around the world. The need to defend fundamental freedoms of consciousness and belief, expression and association, our constitutionally engrained rights, are generally not a matter of political controversy. As stated in the London Declaration “We are alarmed at the resurrection of the old language of prejudice and its modern manifestations – in rhetoric and political action – against Jews, Jewish belief and practice and the State of Israel.”
- However, dissent and opposition to individual actions of the Israeli government are both permitted and encouraged in and outside of Israel, just as political dissent is permitted and encouraged with respect to any democratic nation.
- As stated in the London Declaration, calls for the destruction of the State of Israel are inherently antisemitic .

What is the goal of the inquiry?

- We hope to gain insight into the problem of antisemitism in Canada and develop meaningful suggestions on how to combat it both locally and globally.

How will the inquiry work?

- The first phase, beginning June 2nd is a call for written submissions on the subject of antisemitism in Canada. Any individual, group or organization is welcome to make a submission, of a maximum of 2000 words to the contact information below. The Inquiry Panel will review the submissions.
- The Second phase will consist of witnesses testimony at a number of oral hearings. The hearings will be open to the public.
- The Third phase will be the drafting of a report based on the committees findings which will be submitted to the Government of Canada.

Who can make written submissions?

- All individuals and organizations are welcome to make written submissions of a maximum of 2000 words.

Who is paying for/supporting the Inquiry?

- The CPCCA is independent of the Government of Canada, and NGOs or Jewish Community Organizations.
- Funding will only be accepted for the inquiry and conference if it will not compromise the terms of reference and the mandate of the CPCCA.
- We will voluntarily disclose all sources of funding.

What will happen to the inquiry if there is an election?

- The problem of antisemitism goes beyond politics, and we have put safeguards in place so that if there is an election the work of the committee will be able to continue.
- The Steering Committee and Inquiry Panel Chairs (Scott Reid & Mario Silva respectively) have been empowered to work on behalf of the committee during the writ period.