

AHEPA Canada, Canada-Israel Committee,
Canadian Hellenic Congress, Quebec Jewish Congress

PRESS RELEASE

Conference on the Emerging Hellenic-Israeli Relations

Montreal, Quebec, Canada (March 28, 2011) - On Monday, April 4, 2011, two pioneer events took place in Montreal with the participation of the Greek and Jewish communities. To emphasize the bilateral and communal nature of the events, the conference proceedings alternated between the Montreal Hellenic Community Centre (5757 Wilderton Avenue) and the Gelber Conference Center/CJA Federation Building (5151 Cote Ste-Catherine). The first event, at the Hellenic Community Centre, was a workshop highlighting the temporal relationship between the two peoples, and examined the national issues currently of concern to Greece and Israel. Speakers included Professor Kenneth Matziorinis (McGill University), Professor Amikam Nachmani (Bar-Ilan University), Professor Andreas Gerolymatos (Simon Fraser University), and Professor Harold Waller (McGill University). The day ended with a reception at the Jewish community's Gelber Conference Center, in order for participants from both communities to have the opportunity to network and continue the exchange of views and ideas.

The Greeks and the Jews have a long and intertwined past and have profoundly influenced the course of human history. This great cultural tradition has shaped the identity of the current states of Israel and Greece as well as the large Diaspora communities of the two nations. Recognizing their common and emerging geo-strategic interests and the potential for fruitful cooperation across many fields, Israel and Greece have recently accelerated their expanding relationship. The leading bodies of the Greek and Jewish communities in Canada welcome this development and would like to embrace this opportunity for better cooperation. The relations between the Greek and Jewish communities in Canada have been traditionally warm and friendly and there are many areas (education and the teaching of the mother language, ensuring that cultural traditions are passed on to younger generations, support of the homeland etc) that each can develop further by drawing on each others' different experiences.

To promote these goals and foster these friendships, the events of April 4 will be followed by other bi-community meetings with specific items for discussion and study.

These pioneer events have been jointly organized by official community organizations representing the two communities in Canada –the Canada - Israel Committee, AHEPA Canada, the Canadian-Hellenic Congress, and the Quebec Jewish Congress. In addition to the community organizations, the events have been made possible with the support and participation of the Israeli and Greek Ambassadors to Canada, her Excellency Mrs. Miriam Ziv and his Excellency Mr. Eleftherios Anghelopoulos, respectively, the Consul Generals of Israel and Greece, the Honourable Mr. Yoram Elron and Mr. Thanos Kafopoulos, respectively, as well as Canadian Parliamentarians of Jewish and Greek descent, including Senators Linda Frum, Pana Merchant and Leonidas Housakos, and former Minister of Justice Irvin Cotler.

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