



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

Tainted by partisanship, the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat anti-Semitism loses Bloc Quebecois members

Montreal, March 12, 2010 – The Bloc Quebecois announced Monday that it had decided to resign from the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism (CPCCA) because of the biased and partisan nature of the coalition. Bloc MP Luc Desnoyers, one of the two Bloc members formerly presiding on the Steering Committee, confirmed that the party’s decision reflected its unease in the face of “the inequality of opinions presented before the Coalition,” and “the refusal of the Steering Committee to hear groups with opposing viewpoints.”

Troubled by the lack of diversity of organizations and individuals called to witness before the Coalition, the Bloc had formally requested last November that Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) and the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) be heard, in order to diversify the almost exclusively pro-Israel viewpoints thus far presented to the CPCCA. The request from the Bloc, as well as requests from other members of the Steering Committee, went unaddressed by the Steering Committee – a committee led by Conservative Scott Reid – and neither CJPME nor CAF received an invitation to participate throughout the length of the hearings.

In a letter dated Feb. 22, 2010, the CPCCA thanked CJPME for its “important contribution,” with assurances that the inquiry “was committed to an open and transparent process that takes into account the views of all parties who submitted evidence.” Nevertheless, a review of the list of witnesses called to present to the CPCCA during ten days of hearings between Nov. 2, 2009 and Feb. 8, 2010 indicated that the selection was clearly made according to partisan criteria favouring a particular viewpoint. “CJPME is absolutely opposed to anti-Semitism,” declared Thomas Woodley, President of CJPME. “Nevertheless, if an objective perspective is truly desired, the CPCCA hearings must welcome diverse, and potentially opposing viewpoints.”

The CPCCA is an ad hoc (non-official) coalition which brought together – until the resignation of the Bloc – parliamentarians of each of the major political parties. The CPCCA launched a call for briefs last summer to “gain insight into the problem of antisemitism [sic] in Canada and develop meaningful suggestions on how to combat it both locally and globally.” CJPME was among the groups having submitted briefs questioning the Coalition’s assertions that anti-Semitism is on the rise in Canada. CJPME specifically contested the Coalition’s position that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic, and argued that the Coalition’s position would violate Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The CPCCA expects to issue its final report and recommendations in a few weeks.

About CJPME – *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.*

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