MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF CITIZENSHIP, IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

The Honourable Jason Kenney, PC, MP
Minister of Citizenship,
Immigration and Multiculturalism



On behalf of the Government of Canada, I welcome all participants to the second annual conference of the *Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism* (ICCA) and its related Experts' Forum.

Since attending the first meeting of the ICCA in London in 2009, I have been pleased to witness the efforts that it has made to combat anti-Semitism around the world. Canada sent the largest delegation of parliamentarians to that conference, demonstrating our commitment to combating the uniquely durable and pernicious hatred that is anti-Semitism.

Canada's approach to anti-Semitism is part of our ongoing efforts to combat racism and xenophobia, and it plays a key role in our overall strategy to build an integrated, socially cohesive society. This is why Canada has laboured, not only to fight anti-Semitism, but to proudly take on a leadership role in what must be a global effort.

In June 2009, we became the 27th member of the *Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research* (ITF). Through our participation, Canada can learn from others and share our own approach to holocaust education and commemoration.

Canada has also acted to address anti-Semitism inside our own borders. Supporting education in Canada to teach future generations the lessons of the Holocaust and the effects of xenophobia, including anti-Semitism, is one of our principal objectives. We are also working domestically, through our multiculturalism program, to build bridges between different cultural and faith groups.

We are collecting hate crimes data from the police forces across the country to develop a clear picture of hate crimes in Canada and their targets. In 2007, about 16% of hate crimes reported to police in Canada targeted Jews. Although Jews make up only about 1% of Canada's population, this accounted for almost two-thirds of hate crimes targeting a religious group.

We are also addressing historical anti-Semitism in Canada, which had tragic results when Canada closed its doors to European Jewish refugees for over 15 years before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust. We remember clear examples of this failure of policy, such as the plight of the S.S. St. Louis in 1939, which was denied entry to the ports in Cuba, the United States and eventually Canada.

To learn lessons from these events, we launched a $2.5 million fund to help commemorate the effects of restrictions on immigration of European Jewry in that period. Later this year, a permanent memorial to the victims of the St. Louis and others who Canada rejected during that sad period will be dedicated at Pier 21, Canada's National Immigration Museum in Halifax, in collaboration with the Canadian Jewish Congress.

We are also partnering with B'nai Brith Canada to invest in the National Task Force on Holocaust Research, Remembrance and Education. It held a major conference earlier this year on the St. Louis, is conducting a study of the incident and is developing resources, such as a teacher's manual, a secondary school textbook and a DVD documentary, to allow educators to teach about the Holocaust.

Canada's rejection of Holocaust refugees was an aberration which should remind us all of the importance of our deeper tradition of pluralism and tolerance.

I applaud the efforts of the Parliamentary Centre, the ICCA and the *Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism* to host this conference. By supporting this work, I am confident we will further engage the global community in the struggle against hatred and the fight against the evil of anti-Semitism.

I also commend all of those attending this important event and hope for great success in pursuing these important goals in the future.