



PRESS RELEASE

CANADIAN ORDER OF AHEPA

For Immediate Release
Friday, June 18, 2010

Contact: AHEPA CANADA
Phone: (519) 273-3205
Email: naroutzidis@naeng.com

NEWS RELEASE

AHEPA CANADA WELCOMES MOTION OF CANADIAN PARLIAMENT ON THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF HALKI

**CANADIAN PARLIAMENT PASSES MOTION INTRODUCED BY JOHN CANNIS, MP
REQUESTING THE RE-OPENING OF THE ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF
HALKI IN TURKEY**

STRATFORD, ON – Nick Aroutzidis, President of AHEPA Canada, a leading organization for Canada's three hundred thousand citizens of Greek origin and countless Philhellenes, expressed his satisfaction on the motion introduced in the House of Commons on June 15, 2010 by Mr. John Cannis, MP for Scarborough Centre, stating *"That the House express its support for the reopening of the Christian Orthodox Theological Institute of Halki which is located in Halki, Turkey, and recognizes the institute as a significant part of the Christian Orthodox faith and world culture."* The motion was approved unanimously by all parties, and members of the Canadian Parliament.

The Seminary of Halki was established in 1844 and was used to educate and train Eastern Orthodox Christian clergy, but was closed down by the Turkish government in 1971. Since then, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, based in the Fanar district of Istanbul, Turkey has been deprived of the main school available to train and prepare its clergy. The School's library is one of the richest and oldest of its kind in the world and scholars and clergy have been unable to use its rare books and manuscripts.

"It is not often that a member's motion receives the unanimous support of parliamentarians" said AHEPA Canada President Nick Aroutzidis and "I am encouraged by the fact that our recent visit on Parliament Hill during which we pressed senior government officials including the Prime Minister on the issue of human rights and religious freedoms for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the School of Halki helped win unanimous consent in the House".

"Just as the Pope based in Vatican City leads the world wide Roman Catholic Church, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew based in Fanar, Istanbul" (the ancient city of Constantinople) "leads the world wide Eastern Orthodox Church" said Past President Antoniou. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is the spiritual leader of the 650,000 Canadians of Orthodox Christian Faith and 300 million around the world. "The Greek Orthodox Church of Canada reports administratively to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul and not the Church of Greece" Aroutzidis noted, and as such "the problems facing the Patriarch are problems facing our Canadian Greek Orthodox community".

"It is time that Turkey show greater respect for human and property rights of its minorities and stop violating the religious rights and freedoms of our 1700-year old Christian Church" and "we congratulate Mr. Cannis for introducing and successfully winning support for this motion" added Aroutzidis.