



PRESS RELEASE

CANADIAN ORDER OF AHEPA

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NEWS RELEASE

AHEPA CANADA PRESIDENT MEETS WITH PRIME MINISTER STEPHEN HARPER AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

AHEPA PRESIDENT NICK AROUTZIDIS DISCUSSES THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND OTHER PRESSING HELLENIC ISSUES

STRATFORD, ON – Nick Aroutzidis, President of AHEPA Canada, a leading organization for Canada's three hundred thousand citizens of Greek origin and countless Philhellenes, met yesterday with Prime Minister of Canada Mr. Stephen Harper on Parliament Hill and held a day-long session of meetings with senior government officials to discuss issues of concern to Canada's Greek-Canadian community. He was accompanied by Past Canadian AHEPA President Frank Antoniou and a delegation of senior leaders from Canada's Greek community.

Canadian officials who participated in the day long series of meetings included Mr. Peter Van Loan, Minister of International Trade, Mr. Tony Clement, Minister of Industry, Mr. Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. Deepak Obhrai, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senator Leo Housakos.

“We are extremely grateful for the generous amount of time and access to the senior ranks of government we were accorded on Parliament Hill”, said Aroutzidis. “We are encouraged by the high level of engagement the Harper administration has demonstrated to our community, and its desire to maintain an on-going two-way open line of communication. We look forward to working with senior representatives of Prime Minister Harper's government on the issues that resonate with our mission, including the continued occupation of Northern Cyprus, the name dispute with the FYROM, the Pontian genocide and the human rights violations and religious rights restrictions facing the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, Turkey”.

“Just as the Pope based in Vatican City leads the world wide Roman Catholic Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate led by Patriarch Bartholomew based in the Fanar, Istanbul” (the ancient city of Constantinople) “leads the world wide 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 and Istanbul has been the seat of Christian Eastern Orthodox Faithful, for nearly 1,700 years. “The Greek Orthodox Church of Canada reports administratively to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul and not the Head of the Church of Greece” Aroutzidis noted, and as such “the problems facing the Patriarch are problems facing our Canadian Greek Orthodox community”.

“The meetings were productive, and we had ample opportunity to present our views and positions on the issues” added Aroutzidis. “Overall, we were very pleased and encouraged.”