

Report:

The 12th Biennial Jerusalem Conference in Canadian Studies

“Responding to the Challenge of Diversity: Canada, Israel, and Beyond”

The conference was held at the Mount Scopus Campus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, between Monday, June 16 and Thursday, June 19, 2008. Approximately 80 academics from 11 countries attended the conference as presenters, chairs, and guests. The conference opened with a keynote address by The Honourable Robert Keith Rae, Member of Parliament, Ottawa, on the topic of: “Identity and Pluralism: Some Thoughts on Canada and Israel”. The session was attended by Jon Allen, Canadian Ambassador to Israel, Menachem Magidor, President of the Hebrew University, Ralph Halbert, and over 120 conference participants. This was followed by an opening dinner, during which a Certificate of Merit in recognition of outstanding contributions to the development of Canadian Studies was presented to Daphna Oren, the administrative coordinator of the Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies, by Cornelius Remie, President of the International Council for Canadian Studies. The evening concluded with presentations by four recipients of the Halbert Centre and the Israel Association for Canadian Studies academic grants: Michal Schuster, Anna Kosner, and Israel Pupko shared their research topics with the audience and discussed their academic plans. A written message from a fourth grant recipient, Uriel Aboluf, who was unable to attend the conference, was read by Allen Zysblat, a member of the Conference Steering Committee, of which Shuli Barzilai, Arza Churchman, and Rita Watson are also members.

The first conference session on Tuesday, June 17 was a well-attended workshop on the topic of “Religion, Culture, and Rights: A Conversation about Women’s Rights” presented by Janice Stein, Director of the Munk

Centre at the University of Toronto, and chaired by Nachman Ben-Yehuda, Head of the Academic Committee of the Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies. The respondents to Prof. Stein's lecture included Professors Bruce Elman, Noreen Golfman, Mordechai Kremnitzer, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Shira Wolosky. A lively open discussion followed the lecture and five responses.

The conference sessions were the platform for discussion of a variety of topics related to the theme, several of which focused on the Bouchard Taylor Commission. Issues related to First Nations in Canada were also central to many of the sessions and follow-up discussions. As in recent years, the conference was also the occasion of the annual meeting of the Halbert Centre Advisory Committee and the General Assembly of the Israel Association for Canadian Studies.

A memorable evening in honor of the late Prof. Arie Shachar was held at the Israel Museum on June 17th, chaired by Daniel Ben-Natan, President of the Israel Association for Canadian Studies. Prof. Shachar was the first Director of the Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies and the first President of the Israel Association for Canadian Studies. The speakers included family members, friends, colleagues, and former students who paid tribute to Prof. Shachar's personal and professional contributions: Ralph Halbert, David Cameron, David Morley, Daphna Oren, Eran Razin, Gillad Rosen, and Tmima Shachar. A message received from Peter Oberlander, who was unable to attend, was read to the audience. Among the guests present at this event were two of Arie Shachar's children, Tamar and Erez.

The evening was also the occasion for the inauguration of the Arie Shachar Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Canadian Studies, which was awarded to Gillad Rosen by Shuli Barzilai, Director of the Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies, and Daniel Ben-Natan, and the presence of Tmima Shachar. The fellowship

is co-sponsored this year by the Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University, the Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies, and the Israel Association for Canadian Studies.

On Wednesday, June 18, the Emmy award winning Canadian-Israeli producer and director Simcha Jacobovici presented his documentary film, *Northern Justice*, about the Canadian legal system and the indigenous population of the Canadian Arctic. The screening was followed by a discussion with Simcha Jacobovici and Irwin Cotler, Member of Parliament and Former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

The conference concluded with a guided tour of the Old City of Jerusalem on Thursday, June 19. In keeping with the conference theme, the tour focused on several of the holy sights central to the religions represented in Jerusalem.

The staff of the Halbert Centre and the Israel Association for Canadian Studies has received a great many thank you letters and encouraging messages from the conference participants.