Canada

National Affairs

Canada enjoyed a year of political stability and relative prosperity. The minority Conservative government, which gained power in 2006, survived in the four-party House of Commons largely because the other parties were unwilling to force another election. The economy grew, unemployment was lower than it had been in decades, and the dollar ascended with surprising rapidity, exceeding par with its American counterpart for the first time in 30 years. Political highlights included elections in the two largest provinces, Ontario and Quebec, neither of them leading to a change of government.

In preparation for the Quebec election in March, Montreal’s Jews were concerned because of their strong aversion to the secessionist Parti Québécois (PQ). While the governing Liberals had lost popularity since winning a majority in 2003, they were able to hang on to a narrow plurality in a National Assembly that was split among three parties, resulting in the first minority government for the province in over a century. The fact that the PQ was relegated to third place provided a measure of satisfaction to the Jewish community. Although Lawrence Bergman and Russell Copeman, both Liberals, were reelected, Premier Jean Charest left Bergman out of his new cabinet, the first time in decades that a Liberal premier with Jews in his caucus had failed to include at least one. In November, a delegation from the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) met with Charest and expressed the community’s dissatisfaction at the lack of Jewish cabinet representation. The biggest story of the election was the emergence of Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ) as the second largest party, and thus the official opposition. Jews had very little connection with the ADQ, and, as usual, gave almost all their votes to the Liberals.

Ontario’s election in October (originally scheduled for the Jewish hol-
iday of Shemini Atzeret but then changed after strenuous protests) focused on the issue of public funding for religious schools other than Catholic. Several successive provincial governments had refused to grant these schools the funding granted to Catholic education, and as a result day-school tuitions were substantially higher than in the five Canadian provinces that did provide support. There were about 40 Jewish day schools in Ontario—in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, and London—enrolling some 13,000 students.

In this election campaign, Conservative leader John Tory made the extension of funding to other religions the central plank of his platform, calculating perhaps that the move would attract additional votes to his party, which traditionally had not done well among minorities. Unfortunately for Tory, his party, and the various religious schools, the move backfired and Dalton McGuinty's Liberal Party won a second majority government. Despite the efforts of Jews and other religious groups, polls showed that most Ontarians opposed the Conservative position. There was no evidence that any substantial part of the electorate, aside from members of religious groups that would have benefited directly, had warmed to the idea. University of Toronto political scientist Nelson Wiseman described the Conservative school-funding initiative as follows: “They pulled a grenade and it blew up in their face.”

The tenor of the debate about the proposal during the campaign alarmed many Jews and made some of them regret that the matter had ever been raised. Canadian Jewish News (CJN) editor Mordechai Ben-Dat pointed to the “overwhelming hostility” of the electorate toward the proposal and “the shameful, incendiary incitement of this hostility by the premier and other leading Liberals.” After the election, a B’nai Brith Canada (BBC) press release noted that the contest had been “fraught with bigotry and prejudice, much of it feeding misconceptions about the . . . issue of fair funding.” Accepting the verdict of the voters, Tory formally abandoned his pledge to support funding the religious schools. The prospect of direct government funding, a long-sought goal of the Jewish community, now seemed dead for the foreseeable future.

Among those elected as Liberals were Monte Kwinter and David Caplan, both cabinet ministers in the previous government. However, McGuinty dropped Kwinter from the new cabinet while retaining Caplan. Others elected to the provincial legislature were Liberals David Zimmer and Conservative Peter Shurman. Shurman’s victory probably reflected a rise in Jewish support for the Conservatives because of the school-funding issue.
In a federal by-election in the Montreal constituency of Outremont, Liberal leader Stephane Dion's hand-picked candidate, academic Joce-lyn Coulon, raised concerns among Jews because of his views on the Middle East. B'nai Brith spokesman Moïse Moghrabi claimed that Coulon, an international-affairs expert frequently quoted in the media, was biased against the U.S. and Israel. However Liberal MP Irwin Cotler defended Coulon as a "critical friend" of Israel whose views were consistent with the basic principles of Canadian foreign policy. Coulon met with Jewish community representatives before the September election and sought to reassure them by backtracking on his earlier call for Israel to negotiate with Hamas. As it turned out, Coulon lost the election, at least in part because some Jews, though habitual Liberals, would not vote for him. Coulon's defeat was also a significant political blow to Dion.

TERRORISM AND MILITANT ISLAM

In February, Parliament considered extending two key parts of anti-terrorism legislation that had been enacted for a five-year period after the 9/11 attacks. These enabled police to make preventive arrests and detentions, and provided for investigative hearings where testimony could be compelled. The government supported extension while the opposition Liberals opposed it due to civil liberties concerns. Liberal MP Irwin Cotler, however, a former justice minister and staunch advocate of human rights, defied his party and expressed support for the bill, but finally abstained. The bill failed because all three opposition parties voted against it. Jewish groups expressed their disappointment. CJC asserted that security had been "significantly eroded." BBC executive vice president Frank Dimant contended that the defeat was "political theatrics at the expense of vital security concerns." Brent Belzberg, cochair of the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA), asserted that the Conservative approach was correct and urged the other parties to join in passing a new law quickly. He argued that "our communal safety is too precious to risk in the name of some perceived parliamentary insult or gamesmanship."

Sen. Jerry Grafstein introduced a private member's bill to make suicide bombing a criminal offense. It passed the first of the required three readings but got no further, despite the backing of numerous prominent public figures. Grafstein viewed his bill as an opportunity for Canada to take the lead among democratic states in giving the government the tools to pursue those who plan such attacks and assist in them. But a Conserva-
A billboard that glorified Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was erected in Windsor in August. As Canada classified Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, there were immediate complaints from both Jews and non-Jews. The billboard was removed after three days.

In October Le Figaro revealed that Canada had identified a Lebanese-Canadian as a suspect in the bombing of the synagogue on Rue Copernic in Paris in 1980 (see AJYB 1982, pp. 197–98). France was still investigating the unidentified man and it was unclear if and when there would be an extradition request. Bernie Farber, CEO of the CJC, expressed the hope that he would be extradited, but noted that two terrorists from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine had long been the subject of deportation proceedings yet remained in Canada. One of them, Issam al-Yamani, faced a deportation hearing in March. Yamani, who arrived in Canada in 1985, admitted his former PFLP membership but contended that the organization was a constitutionally protected political association.

The Victoria Philharmonic Choir in British Columbia presented Handel's Samson oratorio in March from a new angle, transforming the biblical hero into a terrorist, a precursor of today's suicide bombers. The same theme was broadcast on the VPC Website. The production set the scene in Jerusalem in 1946, and had Samson blow himself up at British headquarters.

Israel and the Middle East

The government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper remained quite supportive of Israel. For example, Foreign Minister Peter MacKay, speaking at the Herzliya Conference in January, defended his decision not to meet with Hamas officials while in the region, depicting it as part of Canada's antiterrorism stance. He also emphasized that “the regime in Iran cannot be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons.” MacKay did level some criticisms at Israel, particularly about its conduct at border crossings and the route of the security fence.

Harper's policies came under attack from a surprising source, former prime minister Joe Clark, the man who made the aborted promise to move the Canadian embassy to Jerusalem during the 1979 campaign. In a speech in Montreal in January, Clark accused Harper of jeopardizing Canada's “balanced and careful” Middle East policy through the pro-
Israel tilt during the Lebanon war in 2006, the suspension of aid to Hamas, and alleged closeness with the Bush administration.

MP Cotler took a broad view of the Middle East situation in a Jerusalem speech in July. Referring to a variety of regional threats, including Iran, he contended that the Jewish people was facing "a gathering storm without parallel or precedent since the 1930s," musing that in some respects 2007 resembled 1938. But he concluded that "it is not 1938. There is a Jewish state as an antidote to Jewish vulnerability."

In a rebuff to those who considered Jerusalem to be an integral part of Israel, in July the Federal Court of Appeal upheld a lower court's decision that the government properly declined to allow a citizen's birthplace to be designated as "Jerusalem, Israel" on his passport. The government's policy was to use only the city name in the case of Jerusalem because its status has not yet been determined by negotiations. The court emphasized that the 1947 UN partition resolution did not contemplate Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. The teenage petitioner, Eliyahu Veffer, had contended that the government's position violated his constitutional right to freedom of religion, an argument that the court rejected.

Canada's actions at the UN and its agencies were somewhat more sensitive to Israel's position than in the past. UN Watch, which monitors the UN human rights scene, issued its Human Rights Scorecard in March and ranked Canada first among the member states on the Human Rights Council for its record on human rights, in particular for its opposition to biased resolutions against Israel. In June, the Canadian representative to the council objected strongly to a statement by the president that a package of measures singling out Israel for special scrutiny had been approved by consensus. Then, after the council voted by 46 to 1 (Canada) to back the president's assertion of a consensus, Canada protested. Foreign Minister MacKay expressed Canada's great disappointment in the council's actions, saying that "Canada cannot accept the inclusion of a permanent agenda item on Palestine and the occupied Arab territories, as it singles out one situation for highly politicized, partial and subjective treatment of a complex issue." This stand evoked praise from the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC) and from Israel's foreign minister, Tzipi Livni. Jon Allen, the ambassador to Israel, stressed that his government recognized Israel's need for self-defense in a "tough neighborhood."

However, Louise Arbour, a Canadian who was serving as UN high commissioner for human rights, expressed "her appreciation to all those who contributed to launching the council on a consensual basis." And in September Arbour came under tough criticism from Hillel Neuer, direc-
tor of UN Watch, for lack of balance and for attending a human rights
cference in Iran while ignoring that country's genocidal threats against
Israel. He noted that “she has never once issued a stand-alone statement
against Palestinian terrorism” and that she repeatedly resorted “to a one-
sided narrative that denies Israelis their essential right to self-defense.”
Neuer further criticized Arbour in November for failing to take any ac-
tion against anti-Semitism.

At the annual CIJA Parliamentary Dinner in February, Prime Minis-
ter Harper, referring to the 2006 Lebanon War, told the group that “Is-
rael had a friend when it mattered, and that, my friends, is the only thing
that really counts.” He added that a struggle between a democracy and
a terrorist group “is not a matter for shades of gray, it is a matter of right
and wrong.” Harper also promised that “Israel will always have a stead-
fast friend in Canada's new government.” His remarks were welcomed en-
thusiastically by the audience. Not to be outdone, Stephane Dion, the
opposition leader, declared that “Israel's fight for existence is our fight.
Her struggle for peace and security is our struggle.”

Foreign Minister Livni visited Ottawa in March and thanked the gov-
ernment for its support of Israel and its role in the international strug-
gle against terrorism. She met her counterpart, Peter MacKay, as well as
Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day. At a meeting of the Canada-Israel
Chamber of Commerce she spoke of the prospects for foreign investment
in Israel, emphasizing her country's dynamic economic growth, and
praised the benefits of the free-trade agreement with Canada. She was
preceded by Minister of Public Security Avi Dichter, who addressed a
CIJA luncheon in February. He praised Canada, describing it as a “true
friend and ally.” During his visit he met with the prime minister, Stock-
well Day, and the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,
and briefed the House of Commons Public Safety and National Security
Committee about Iran and about Israel's counterterrorism experience.

Shortly after the Annapolis conference on the Middle East in Novem-
ber, Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert asked his Canadian counterpart
for help in the forthcoming peace negotiations. Stephen Harper told the
House of Commons that “Canada stands ready to assist the process in
any way that we can.” Michael Ignatieff, the Liberal deputy leader, vis-
ited Israel around the same time, and expressed optimism about the
prospects for peace while recognizing the threat posed by Iran. Later, the
new foreign minister, Maxime Bernier, issued a statement saying that
Canada continued to support “the security and well-being of Israel and
its legitimate place within the Middle East and the international com-
munity.”
The Canada-Israel trade agreement was acknowledged as a big success. Ephraim Shoham, leaving his post as Israeli trade commissioner after four years, pointed out that during his posting Israeli exports to Canada increased by 80 percent while trade in the opposite direction was up 50 percent. The most recent figure for total trade was $951 million. Israel and Quebec signed a cooperation agreement in December pertaining to health, education, trade, science, and technology that expanded a pact originally signed in 1997. Israeli consul general Yoram Elron described it as a “milestone agreement” that would reinforce the bilateral relationship. He spoke about a significant growth in Quebec imports from Israel, especially in the areas of medicine, aerospace, and petroleum technology, and pointed to joint ventures as examples of the benefits of the prior agreement.

A number of requests by Russian Israelis for asylum in Canada charged that immigrant children were mistreated in the Jewish state. According to a story in Ha'aretz, Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), looking into the allegations, sent a query to the National Council for the Child in Israel as to whether children from the former Soviet Union faced abuse or official harassment. The council replied in the negative, and the Israeli embassy in Canada angrily accused the purported refugees of “deliberately misleading” the Canadian government. In another immigration matter, the IRB rejected an Israeli woman’s claim for refugee status. She claimed that, as a victim of terrorist attacks, she feared for her life in Israel, but the IRB said that she did not qualify as a victim of persecution because she was not targeted because of her religion.

Following Foreign Minister MacKay’s visit to the Middle East in January, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) decided to increase its aid to the Palestinian Authority, earmarking $12–15 million for humanitarian assistance. In 2006 Canada had suspended aid to the PA after Hamas, classified as a terrorist organization, won control of the government in Gaza. The new aid would be routed through the Temporary International Mechanism, which bypassed Hamas, and was on top of some $20 million spent during the previous year in direct aid to Palestinians. A further $1.2 million was committed to aid in the construction of a border crossing between Israel and Gaza. Some announced aid projects were suspended.

Opposition leader Dion called for the restoration of aid in June, contending that the Hamas government of the PA had in fact dissolved. He claimed that the flow of funds would strengthen Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas. Within a month the government indeed resumed some aid, directed mainly to the West Bank, in recognition of the more mod-
erate policies of the PA after the ouster of Hamas from the government. Later, in December, at the Paris donors' conference, Canada promised a total of $300 million over five years. A spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs assured the public that "Canada will insure that Canadian funds do not directly or indirectly benefit Hamas or other terrorist groups listed under Canadian law."

But Gerald Steinberg, a political scientist at Bar-Ilan University, attacked CIDA in a March column in the Canadian Jewish News. He contended that the agency indirectly promoted the Palestinian position against Israel. It had, for example, provided support for the publication of a book hostile to Israel, and had, according to a report by the Canadian Coalition for Democracies (CCD), allowed funds to go to groups that followed "radical anti-Israel policies." The column provoked harsh criticism from both Canadian and Israeli academics.

When Palestinian minister Mustafa Barghouti visited Canada in March, MacKay declined to meet with him. However, some MPs from the Liberal and New Democratic (NDP) parties and the Bloc Québécois did, and taunted MacKay on the floor of the House over his failure to do so. Barghouti suggested publicly that Canada was too influenced by Israel, an assertion that was strongly rejected by CIC officials. They declared that meeting with Barghouti was "entirely inappropriate" because he was a member of the Hamas government. Also in March, some 37 parliamentarians from all parties formed a Canada-Palestine Friendship Association, in part to insur[e] "that Canada's foreign policy for the Middle East is in the best interests of the Palestinian people."

There was considerable anti-Israel activity in a number of sectors. Some of it was targeted at the Conservative government. Mohamed Elmasry, president of the Canadian Islamic Congress, charged in January that Foreign Minister MacKay was "not accessible to the Canadian Arab and Muslim community." The Canadian Arab Federation joined together with Elmasry's organization in a campaign to dissuade members of various groups from voting Conservative in the next election.

NGO Monitor, an Israeli publication, alleged in May that Alternatives, a Montreal-based organization that received half of its funding from the Canadian government, demonized Israel and promoted political activity against it.

In December an Ontario conference of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) adopted a resolution supporting a boycott and sanctions against Israel and endorsing an educational campaign to inform the public about Israel's "apartheid nature." In explaining the resolution,
union leader Gerry Deveau said that "Israel is assembling the wall and it's causing social, economic, and medical hardship to the people in the area." In contrast, high school teachers in Toronto rejected, in January, a motion to support a boycott of Israel. Throughout the year a group called Boycott Israeli Apartheid Campaign tried to mount boycotts of Chapters and Indigo bookstores to protest the support that owners Heather Reisman and Gerald Schwartz gave to an organization that helped Israeli soldiers.

Employees of the UJA-Federation of Greater Toronto and CJC's Ontario Region decertified their union local from the Canadian Union of Public Employees in May, because of CUPE's antagonistic stance toward Israel over several years. A particularly nasty resolution employing apartheid terminology and calling for a boycott and sanctions, adopted in 2006, was the final straw (see AJYB 2007, pp. 287–88). The employees formed their own association.

Several elected officials and other political figures joined a June demonstration in Montreal that denounced Israel's allegedly illegal occupation and apartheid practices. Opposition members of Parliament and the Quebec National Assembly, along with various candidates, were prominent among the marchers. Several labor federations organized the protest, and they called upon the federal government to revoke the Jewish National Fund's tax-exempt status.

Also in June a group called the Palestinian Media Collective sought to paint the Vancouver Sun as pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian by publishing a parody edition of the paper. The Sun was part of the CanWest chain of newspapers, controlled by the Asper family of Winnipeg. CanWest launched a lawsuit in response. In October, an "alternative" bimonthly in Toronto, This Magazine, devoted an issue to Israel, entitled it "The New Apartheid." The editor declared the focus to be the "clear... injustices perpetrated by the Israeli state against Palestinians."

Several Canadian and U.S. legislators, concerned about the prospects for a second UN World Conference against Racism (the so-called Durban II), slated for 2009, proposed a parallel and competing international human rights meeting. A leading advocate was Sen. Jerry Grafstein, who said that the goal was to "insure that if there's a debate on human rights, it's fair and not distorted." The organizing committee for the upcoming UN conference was chaired by Libya and included Iran.

MP Jason Kenney, a member of the federal cabinet, speaking at a Montreal synagogue in March, pledged that the government would act vigorously to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, saying that
the prime minister was unwavering in his support for Israel and that he “understands its existential fight.” MP Cotler, speaking at the same event, called for the indictment under international law of Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for “incitement to genocide.” In remarks to the press in August, Cotler argued for tough economic sanctions on Iran. Independently, BBC urged that the Iranian president be indicted and barred from Canada.

A dual Canadian and Egyptian citizen, Mohammed Essam Ghoneim al-Attar, was arrested in Cairo in January, put on trial in February, and convicted and sentenced in April to 15 years for spying for Israel. Al-Attar claimed that he confessed under torture. Israel’s public security minister emphatically denied that the man was a spy for Israel and denounced the allegations as “nonsense.”

VisionTV, a multifaith religious cable channel, ran two lectures in July by a Pakistani fundamentalist, Israr Ahmad, who was known for his anti-Semitic writings. Although he did not express such sentiments during those lectures, he did appear to endorse violence in pursuit of jihad. After CJC spokesperson Len Rudner questioned the appropriateness of his appearances, the channel’s president issued a statement condemning any endorsement of violence and announced that no further programs by Ahmad would be offered.

Former grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations Ovide Mercredi visited Israel for the first time in April and May, along with several other native leaders, in a trip coordinated by the Jewish National Fund. He came away “reflecting on how we could use Israel’s model for the benefit” of his own people.

The Campuses

There was strong negative reaction from university presidents to the call by the University and College Union in Britain for a boycott of Israeli universities. Among those who took the lead was McGill’s Heather Munroe-Blum, who quickly issued a statement calling the move “a gross violation of the values which form the foundation . . . of civil society” and added that if they “choose to isolate Israeli universities” they should add McGill to their boycott list. She promised to “stand steadfast against those who seek to undermine academic freedom.” Other presidents taking similar positions were those heading British Columbia; Concordia; York; Simon Fraser; Queen’s; Ryerson; Toronto; Montreal; Dalhousie; Ottawa; Western Ontario; Quebec; Manitoba; Winnipeg; Calgary; and Alberta.
The presidents of Ryerson and Queen’s universities were criticized by elements of their student bodies for opposing the proposed boycott. The Ryerson Students’ Union (RSU) drafted a motion over the summer calling on the university president to retract his statement on the matter and engage in a process of consultation with the campus community. The Queen’s Coalition for Racial and Ethnic Diversity called its principal’s anti-boycott stand “a defamation of Queen’s community members . . . who strongly oppose your stance.”

The RSU, in fact, brought a motion to the general meeting of the Canadian Federation of Students in November in Toronto that called for a boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign against Israel, but it was rejected by more than a two-thirds majority on a technical motion. Later that month RSU ran a program featuring four professors with diverse views about a boycott, although all were anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian. Yet a survey taken in August of 900 students at the University of Toronto and Ryerson showed that 90 percent of respondents opposed a boycott and 71 percent opposed funding anti-Israel campus groups from the mandatory fees paid by students.

Anti-Israel activists exerted considerable pressure on several campuses. “Israeli Apartheid Weeks” were held in February to highlight alleged violations of human rights and repression of Palestinians. In 2007, 40 years after the 1967 Six-Day War, the emphasis was on “Zionist ethnic cleansing, colonization and occupation of Palestine.” The Arab Students’ Collective and Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) coordinated activities at York, McMaster, Concordia, Toronto, and elsewhere. Israeli Arab MK Jamal Zahalka spoke at several of these on “Debunking the Myth of Israeli Democracy.” At Hamilton’s McMaster University an American law professor, formerly legal adviser to the PLO, appeared in January to advocate divestment and accuse Israel of genocide. In February Norman Finkelstein, the controversial former DePaul University professor who was denied tenure, spoke on campus. At the University of Toronto, Finkelstein lectured in November, and there was also an anti-Israel rally there.

Jewish student groups, unable to convince university authorities to take steps against these activities, sought to counter their effects by hosting events of their own. For example, they invited Israeli ambassador Alan Baker to speak at the University of Toronto, where he declared that to label Israel as practicing apartheid was “a celebration of ignorance, hypocrisy, academic dishonesty, and crude propaganda.” In March, at that university, Jewish groups joined with others to sponsor Freedom and Democracy Week, which included lectures on terrorism and extremism,
with reference to the Canadian experience. At York, a new Campus Coalition of Zionists (CCZ) set up a table to distribute literature, mostly about Iran. On November 20, students manning the table were "physically and verbally intimidated" by anti-Israel agitators who forced them to leave and then destroyed their materials. The next day CCZ and other groups sponsored a lecture by Itamar Marcus, director of Palestinian Media Watch. After his talk anti-Israel students in the audience shouted invective at Marcus, and subsequently some students demanded that the York senate discipline CCZ for spreading hate speech on campus. Although several senators expressed support, there was no action by year's end. The Jewish student group Hillel avoided confrontational events, preferring dialogues and "positive educational programs." Thus Hillel joined with several other Toronto-area student groups to organize Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Week in November, highlighting not only the Jewish experience under the Nazis but also the suffering of Armenians, Rwandans, Darfuris, and Cambodians.

The Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, based in Montreal, established a training program for students interested in advocating for Israel. The Student Israel Advocacy Seminars began in the fall and ran for the rest of the academic year, combining academic lectures by professors with practical seminars on advocacy techniques. Although students who had worked with CIJR in the past often went on to professional pro-Israel work, director Frederick Krantz felt the need for more systematic preparation for larger numbers of students. He said that pro-Israel students were not generally well prepared with an ideological focus and often did not have an adequate historical background.

York professor David Noble won a labor arbitration case against his university in November, and was awarded $2,500. The arbitrator found that the administration had violated the collective agreement by issuing a press release in 2004 that condemned a flyer he was distributing on campus that made accusations about connections between pro-Israel donors and the university (see AJYB 2005, p. 296). Another case arising from the Noble incident was also resolved during the year. For his actions during two campus protests in defense of the Noble flyer, student Daniel Freeman-Maloy had been suspended for three years. Although the suspension was lifted after only three months, Freeman-Maloy sued. The suit was settled in May 2007 without disclosure of the terms, and Freeman-Maloy enrolled as a graduate student at York in the fall.

The University of Windsor law school ended a 34-year-old policy of canceling classes on the High Holy Days. While Noble has been cam-
painging against a similar practice at York, there was no indication that his efforts had any effect at Windsor. The dean said that the school would develop a new policy to accommodate all minority religious groups, not just Jews. This left York and the University of Toronto as the only law schools canceling classes on those days.

Shiraz Dossa, a political science professor at St. Francis Xavier University, encountered considerable hostility from colleagues in January after he returned from the Tehran Holocaust-denial conference held in late 2006. Over 100 professors signed a letter declaring “profound embarrassment” over his participation, and the university president termed Holocaust denial “abhorrent.”

Anti-Semitism and Racism

There were several anti-Semitic incidents in various parts of the country during the year. One of the most upsetting was the firebombing of the YM-YWHA in Montreal on the night of the Passover seder in April, with a Molotov cocktail. There were no damages or injuries. Two men, Azim Ibragimov and Omar Bulphred, were arrested for that incident as well as for a similar 2006 attack on a Hasidic school in Outremont (see AJYB 2007, p. 291). Both men were Muslim immigrants who had become Canadian citizens. The police declared that anti-Semitism had been a motivating factor in both cases, making the crimes more serious than ordinary arson.

Vandals threw rocks through the windows of a Chabad center in Toronto in March. A similar incident occurred in October at a synagogue in the Montreal area, and the young man who was caught and charged was wearing Nazi gear and insignia. An arson attack destroyed a Satmar home in Val David, a resort community north of Montreal, in June. Anti-Semitic graffiti were painted on synagogues in Edmonton and Montreal in January. The same happened to a synagogue in the Vancouver area in April, and two teenagers were caught and charged. In the small Ontario town of Bowmanville, a rental home owned by Jews was damaged and defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti in September. There were also two incidents in the York region north of Toronto: in October, nine vehicles were painted with anti-Semitic graffiti, and in December, a home was similarly defaced and the car parked there burned. Jewish high-school students in Winnipeg were the targets of anti-Semitic slurs and a death threat during a visit to another high school in November.

Internet promulgation of hatred was a persistent problem. In January,
The long-running case of the former aboriginal leader David Ahenakew reached a new stage in 2007. Ahenakew was convicted in 2005 for promoting hatred against Jews through his public statements, but the conviction was overturned and a new trial ordered in 2006 (see AJYB 2007, p. 292). The government’s appeal of that decision began in June 2007. The question at issue was whether Ahenakew had intended to promote hatred with his anti-Semitic remarks. The Crown prosecutor contended that he did, and BBC used its intervenor status to argue that the most important consideration was the content of his words, which did convey hatred, whatever his intentions may have been.

White supremacist Paul Fromm, a longtime public school teacher, had his teaching license lifted by a disciplinary tribunal of the Ontario College of Teachers in November. The action was based on his activities over many years outside the classroom that were “inconsistent with the values of the profession,” including the use of “racist language in relation to Jews.”

A Toronto synagogue held a forum on anti-Semitism in the media in November, where National Post columnist Robert Fulford suggested that anti-Israel bias, especially in the liberal media, had spilled over into anti-Semitism.

The Quebec Press Council found that National Post columnist Barbara Kay had unfairly portrayed francophone Quebeckers, particularly the separatists, as anti-Semitic and weak on the terrorism issue. In a column published during Israel’s 2006 war in Lebanon entitled “The Rise of Quebeckistan,” Kay was commenting about a Montreal protest march against the war, attended by Quebec politicians, which featured many
antIsrael expressions (see AJYB 2007, pp. 284–85). The council ruled in March that her article lacked “balance, rigor, level-headedness, and . . . respect for certain social groups.” Both Kay and her paper dismissed the decision, and she charged the council with a “Kafkaesque” attempt to intimidate critics of Quebec political life.

Business executive Tony Comper and his wife, Elizabeth, were honored at a Montreal dinner in April for their leadership in organizing nonJewish business leaders to combat anti-Semitism (see AJYB 2007, p. 292). They received the Scopus Award from Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, archbishop of Quebec, wrote an open letter in November that appeared in several newspapers acknowledging mistakes made by the Roman Catholic Church in Canada. Among them was “the narrow-minded attitudes of certain Catholics, before 1960, that favored anti-Semitism.”

**Holocaust-Related Matters**

Justice for aging accused Nazi war criminals proceeded at a very slow pace. Michael Seifert, wanted for years by Italian authorities for torture and murder at a transit camp near Bolzano, lost his appeal in August, as the British Columbia Court of Appeal rejected his lawyer’s arguments that his client was too sick and frail to go to prison and that Irwin Cotler, then serving as minister of justice, was biased when he acted on an earlier court ruling. Another step against Seifert was taken in November, when a Federal Court judge ruled that he had obtained his citizenship “by misrepresenting and concealing his activities during the war and his place of birth.” This made it possible for Seifert’s citizenship to be revoked, a necessary prelude to deportation to Italy. (His final appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada was rejected in early 2008.)

In May the cabinet ruled on the citizenship revocations of four men. It decided not to revoke those of Wasyl Odynsky and Vladimir Katriuk, both of whom had been found earlier to have lied about their wartime activities on their applications for immigration. BBC went to court to try to force the government to change its position. The cabinet did revoke the citizenship of Helmut Oberlander and Jacob Fast, who were found to have lied about their participation in Nazi units when they applied for admission to Canada. This was the second revocation for Oberlander, who had gotten the earlier one reversed by the Federal Court in 2004. Justice Minister Rob Nicholson, announcing the decision, stated that
"Canada will not become a safe haven for anyone who has been involved in war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide."

Nevertheless, the Simon Wiesenthal Center gave Canada a grade of "F" in its annual evaluation of international efforts against Nazi war criminals. The center's director, Efraim Zuroff, asserted that "Canada has not been able to deport eight Nazi collaborators who have been stripped of their citizenship. The entire process has broken down and it's an embarrassment." He was particularly critical of Canada's lenient appeals process and what he considered a lack of political will to bring cases to a conclusion. Since 1994, when the present system for such deportations was adopted, 21 cases had been initiated but not a single deportation carried out. In January, CJC, joined by representatives of the Armenian, Roma, and Rwandan communities, held a press conference where the speakers called on the government to act promptly in the matter of aging war criminals such as Oberlander, Katriuk, Fast, Odynsky, Jura Skomatchuk, and Josef Furman.

The effort to recover paintings looted by the Nazis from art dealer Max Stern, who later settled in Canada, continued in several countries (see AJYB 2007, p. 293). Stern's estate (three universities in Canada and Israel were the beneficiaries) was seeking to recover up to 200 artworks that Stern was forced to sell under duress in 1937. One painting was located in Spain. The owner, a foundation that had acquired it some years earlier, was persuaded to transfer title to the estate, but the painting was allowed to remain on permanent loan to the foundation. Another painting was owned by a Rhode Island woman, who moved it to Germany when the estate began to inquire about it. In June, a U.S. District Court judge ordered her not to move it again, pending the outcome of legal proceedings. In December, the judge ruled that the forced sale in 1937 amounted to theft and ordered the painting turned over to the Stern estate. According to an announcement in December, a third painting was recovered, which would be put on display at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Prime Minister Harper addressed a gathering on Parliament Hill on Holocaust Memorial Day in April and drew a connection between the destruction of European Jewry and the threat that Israel now faced. Harper said that political leaders "must stand up to those who advocate the destruction of Israel and its people today and they must be unequivocal in their condemnation of anti-Semitic despots, terrorists and fanatics."

The first Echenberg Family Conference on Human Rights was held at Montreal's McGill University in October. Focusing on the prevention of
genocide, the program featured first-person testimony from survivors of the genocides in Armenia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, and Darfur, joined by Jews and Roma who gave accounts of the Nazi annihilation programs. Attention was also given to scholarly analyses of how to identify incipient genocides and prevent them. Hermann Gruenwald's new book, *After Auschwitz: One Man's Story*, was launched during the conference.

In November, the Azrieli Foundation's Memoir Project held a public event in Toronto to launch the publication of its first series of six memoirs of Canadian survivors.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

A study of Jewish mobility patterns, based on 2001 census data, was released in March. Demographer Charles Shahar found confirmation of a trend that had been observed for several decades: Toronto was the leading destination for Jews moving within Canada, while Montreal continued to lose Jews. Between 1996 and 2001, Toronto's Jewish community attracted about 2,300 internal migrants, about the same number that left Montreal. Ottawa and Calgary gained about 300 Jews each, and Hamilton showed a rise of 170. Vancouver and Halifax lost 30–40 Jews each, while Winnipeg lost about 265. The data also showed that Toronto attracted the most Jews from outside Canada, about 10,400, while about 3,000 went to Montreal and 1,750 to Vancouver. Immigration into Winnipeg was estimated at about 750, meaning a net gain of perhaps 500 Jews into a community that had been declining for some time. The latest estimate for the total Jewish population in Canada was around 370,000.

**Communal Affairs**

The Canadian Jewish Congress held its triennial plenary in Ottawa in June. One of the highlights was the election, for the first time in CJC history, of co-presidents, Rabbi Reuven Bulka and Sylvain Abitbol. A major issue discussed at the plenary was a proposal to change the internal operations of CJC: instead of national elections, the senior officers would henceforth be appointed by a board representing the three largest federations (Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver), Congress regions, and the
Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA). The idea raised the ire of Congress veterans, who valued its democratic traditions and saw elections as a key element in the body’s legitimacy. Abitbol, a former president of the Montreal federation, strongly advocated the new by-law, believing it would streamline CJC’s operation. Bulka, however, before his election as co-president, had expressed reservations. After the proposal to approve the change passed, Bulka assured the delegates that “Congress will continue to be the voice of the Jewish people in Canada.”

In a series of articles in the *Canadian Jewish News* in March, Prof. Harold Waller of McGill University analyzed developments in Canadian Jewish organizational life in recent years, with special emphasis on the changing role of CJC and its relationship with the local federations. Since CJC lacked a dependable funding base, he argued, it had become increasingly dependent on the federations for its survival, and in the process lost some of its autonomy. Furthermore, when CIJA was established in 2004 it was given the major responsibility for community advocacy, meaning that CJC’s budget allocations would now come through that body, further reducing its autonomy. The new corporate-type structure was defended by some Congress leaders, as the advocacy function within the organized community, with its multitude of organizations, was now more clearly defined and, perhaps, more effective.

Waller’s articles stimulated considerable discussion, notably on the letters page of the *CJN*. Another article appearing in the paper in June, by Prof. Michael Brown of York University, dealt with the impact of the move away from traditional elections. He opined that “Congress was once the pride of Canadian Jewry, the kind of organization that American Jews have never been able to establish, a truly representative body.” He continued that “assisted suicide is proposed for the parliament of the Jewish people of Canada, which would end its role as a representative communal spokesperson and give it a new role as the mouthpiece for those ‘who know best.’” In his view the structural changes “will mark the final step in . . . the move from democracy to plutocracy.” This provoked a strongly worded response, published in the *CJN*, from numerous CJC, federation, and CIJA officials. They dismissed Brown’s critique as nonsense and argued that the new arrangements would enhance CJC’s effectiveness. They concluded that “holding on to false vestiges of the past to forgo change is not in the best interests of amcha.”

Internal strife that B’nai Brith Canada faced was equally intense. A number of senior officials, including former presidents Morley Wolfe and Harvey Crestohl, charged that the organization had become too cen-
centralized and that the head office was not accountable to members. Specifically, they claimed that changes in the constitution had not been legally approved at the 2005 annual general meeting, despite a finding to the contrary by the B'nai Brith International appeals court. Crestohl claimed that up to a quarter of BBC's membership was unhappy with the situation. The dissidents began publishing a newsletter in May, in the hope of restoring BBC "to its once prominent position as a respected and admired organization."

Efforts were made in Toronto to avoid a repetition of what occurred surrounding the community commemoration of Yom Hashoah in 2006. That year the Orthodox rabbinate complained about the scheduled participation of the mixed-gender Renanim Youth Choir in the ceremonies because of the Orthodox prohibition on kol ishah (men hearing women sing). When the choir was then removed from the program, the cross-denominational Toronto Board of Rabbis dropped out of the event in protest. The solution, for 2007, was a mixed choir of students below the age of bar and bat mitzvah. With that compromise, both the board and the Orthodox Vaad Harabonim participated. The keynote speaker was Baroness Sibylle Niemoeller von Sell, herself a resister against the Nazis and later a convert to Judaism.

The government of Ontario gave UJA Federation of Greater Toronto $15 million toward the construction of three new community centers that were central to the federation's future plans.

Israel-Related Activities

In a major reorganization, the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC) eliminated nine staff positions in June. The move reflected budgetary stringencies as well as a shift in strategic priorities. CIC, now funded by CIJA, was deemphasizing its research function and stressing government and media relations and missions to Israel. CIJA CEO Hershell Ezrin, commenting on the action, claimed that pro-Israel advocacy remained his organization's highest priority.

In July, the Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians, which claimed 115 members, was rejected for a second time in an attempt to become a part of CJC. The group opposed Israel's policies in Gaza and the West Bank and supported calls by labor unions for a boycott of Israel. Announcing its negative decision, CJC explained that the alliance's goals were inconsistent with those of Congress. CJC president Ed Morgan, in fact, took a strong stand against the proposed boycott of Israeli acade-
mic institutions in a June letter to the British Association of University Teachers. He suggested, perhaps tongue in cheek, that British academics and universities should be boycotted because of their country’s invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Zeev Bielski, head of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization, praised the Canadian federations for their quick response and financial support of the beleaguered citizens of Sderot, the target of continuous rocket attacks. The funds collected enabled children to spend part of the summer in camps far from hostilities.

Family members of the three kidnapped Israeli soldiers, Eldad Regev, Ehud Goldwasser, and Gilad Shalit, addressed members of the Toronto community in November at Shaarei Shomayim Congregation. Although Consul General Amir Gissin and the family representatives commended the Canadian government for its actions on behalf of the soldiers, MP Anita Neville, speaking in Winnipeg a day earlier, charged that the government’s efforts were inadequate.

Justice for Jews from Arab Countries issued a report in November regarding events in the 1947–48 period that affected those Jews. Several Canadians were involved in preparing and then releasing the report. Their main finding was that several key Arab countries had proposed draft laws that would have declared their Jewish residents to be “members of the Jewish minority in the state of Palestine,” frozen their bank accounts and used the funds to support “resistance to Zionist ambitions in Palestine,” interned “active Zionists,” and confiscated their assets. Stanley Urman, executive director of the organization, revealed that the exodus of nearly one million Jews from Arab countries “did not occur by happenstance. It was state-organized state collusion, led by the Arab League as a weapon in their struggle against the State of Israel.” David Matas, chair of JJAC’s legal advisory committee, asserted that the deportations and forcible displacements ought to be considered crimes against humanity. MP Irwin Cotler termed the actions “state-sponsored oppression.”

Radio Shalom, a unique trilingual station in Montreal, went on the air in May featuring music, talk, and news from Israel. The station did not broadcast on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

Religion

Toronto’s Orthodox rabbinate suspended the performance of all conversions at the beginning of the year in order to reevaluate its standards,
Rabbi Reuven Tradburks, head of the bet din (religious court), said that he and his colleagues were waiting for the Rabbinical Council of America to determine its position first. The main impact of potentially more stringent standards would be on families seeking to convert adopted children. In recent years there had been about 50 such conversions annually, about half of them below bar/bat mitzvah age and half above. Anonymous rabbinical critics cited in the CJN contended that changes under consideration represented a further move to the right by Toronto Orthodoxy, and even an attempt to “remake Orthodoxy in the haredi image.” Rabbi Tradburks, however, said the aim was to maintain a consistent definition of Jewishness throughout the Jewish world.

A key aspect of the issue was what level of religious observance to require of parents of adopted children. In May the bet din endorsed an RCA decision allowing only conversions by approved religious courts in accord with broadly accepted Halakhic guidelines, including the demand that parents of adopted children agree to follow an Orthodox lifestyle. This policy had never before been applied in Toronto.

There were a number of issues involving kashrut during the year. In Toronto, the previous monopoly of the Kashruth Council of Canada (COR) was challenged by a new organization, Mehadrin Kosher Supervision, which signed up six restaurants as clients. While Rabbi Tradburks, speaking for the Vaad Harabonim, reaffirmed the view that having one overall authority was best for the community, Mehadrin claimed that competition could only be helpful for the consumer. By year’s end at least two of the establishments supervised by Mehadrin had switched to the established COR.

In Winnipeg, Omnitzky Kosher Food ran into trouble with its rabbinic supervisors and had its kashrut certification removed. This encouraged the opening of a new kosher butcher shop, but it failed after three months and Omnitzky regained its certification.

In Montreal, the community mikveh (ritual bath) became a source of controversy when its operators banned use of the facility for any conversions. Since there were other mikvaot available for Orthodox conversions, the decision forced non-Orthodox rabbis to seek an alternative, and thus it became necessary to travel 120 miles to Ottawa to complete the conversion process. Although Rabbi Itche Gurary, who was in charge of the mikveh, claimed that the rule banning conversions was due to problems of hygiene caused by overuse, critics contended that the closure was deliberately aimed at blocking non-Orthodox conversions. Two Orthodox
rabbis, Michael Whitman and Mordechai Zeitz, expressed support for restoration of the status quo ante.

Toronto's venerable Holy Blossom Temple, the city's leading Reform congregation, considered significant renovations during the year. One of the proposals was to reorient the sanctuary 180 degrees so that it would face east, toward Jerusalem, which is the arrangement in traditional synagogues. The suggestion evoked intense opposition from members aligned with Classical Reform, but a congregational vote in July approved the change. However, an ad hoc Holy Blossom Temple Sanctuary Legacy Group continued to oppose the move and sent an open letter to the board in September urging a halt to the project.

Temple Shalom, a Reform congregation in Winnipeg, established its own *hevra kadisha* (group that prepared Jewish bodies for burial) because the city's only Jewish funeral chapel, Chesed Shel Emes, refused to perform the traditional preparation for bodies that were not going to be "buried in a Halakhically acceptable cemetery." Seven years earlier the temple had purchased land in a non-Jewish cemetery in order to accommodate members who were married to non-Jews and wished to be buried next to them.

The Jewish Theological Seminary's decision in March to admit gays and lesbians to its rabbinical school encountered significant opposition from Toronto's Conservative rabbinate. Rabbi Wayne Allen, president of the Ontario region of the Rabbinical Assembly, declared that "this is an abandonment of traditional Judaism, and as such I can have no part of it." Rabbi Steven Saltzman asked, in light of the decision, what the movement really stood for and how it differed from Reform. Several other rabbis spoke out as well. In a survey released by JTS, 82 percent of Canadian Conservative rabbis and cantors opposed ordination of gays and lesbians, compared to 69 percent in favor in the U.S.

At a panel discussion in Toronto in April, Rabbi Reuven Bulka, a leading Orthodox spokesman, declared that donating an organ or tissue from a deceased person was a matter of *pikuah nefesh* (saving human life) and therefore a religious obligation.

**Education**

Toronto's Board of Jewish Education changed its name in July to the Centre for Enhancement of Jewish Education, to be known informally as the Mercaz. The change was one of several to result from a 2006 study of Jewish education in the city. Other anticipated innovations included
the establishment of a $100-million endowment fund and, on a trial basis, a loan program for tuition. Fiscal matters, such as tuition subsidies and new financing mechanisms, were central to the new body's mandate. In addition, the Mercaz would support adult and other types of informal education.

In Montreal several Orthodox day schools were in trouble with the Quebec government, which partially funded them, because they were not teaching the compulsory government curriculum. Education Minister Michelle Courchesne said that certain unnamed high schools for religious boys were not devoting sufficient time to subjects other than Judaism, and gave them three years to comply with regulations. Marc Gold, president of Federation CJA, supported the government position but noted that the matter was delicate because of "the religious sensibilities of a particular segment of the Orthodox Jewish community." It was estimated by the newspaper La Presse that some 700 students attended the Jewish schools in question. Some schools run by other religious groups were in a similar position.

Another issue involving the Montreal day schools and the Quebec government involved a new compulsory course on comparative religion called Ethics and Religious Culture, scheduled to begin in 2008, aimed at encouraging tolerance and mutual respect among people of different faiths. A number of haredi schools expressed concern that teaching about other religions would compromise the convictions of their own young children, and leaders of some Hasidic schools said that they simply could not teach the course. CJC took the position that the program should begin only in high school, to ease the fears of Orthodox parents of young children. The Solomon Schechter Academy introduced the course early and found that it worked well.

United Talmud Torahs, a Montreal day school, announced in November that it would close its suburban St. Laurent branch because of inadequate enrollment and financial problems and shift the students to the main Montreal location. However, parents mounted a vigorous and ultimately successful initiative to reverse the decision. An ad hoc parents group raised about $160,000 and launched a campaign to encourage more families to join the school. Its closure would have been a blow to the Jewish community in St. Laurent.

A new adult Jewish studies program for the Toronto area and nearby Hamilton, the Maimonides Schools for Jewish Learning, planned to offer Master's degrees as well as nondegree programs. The founder, Prof. Hindy Najman, said the new program "is intended to raise the bar of Jewish ed-
ucation throughout the city." The clientele was expected to include professionals and teachers holding Jewish community positions as well as people who simply wanted to learn more about Jewish civilization.

Community and Intergroup Relations

A national survey in August showed that 78 percent of Canadians had a favorable opinion of Jews. But the results of other surveys were troubling. In one, 53 percent of respondents agreed that minorities should fully adapt to Canadian life, while only 18 percent were prepared to accommodate their disparate needs. In Quebec the numbers were even more dramatic: 77 percent said that minorities should adapt while only 5 percent would agree to accommodate. This gap was consistent with other polls that showed Quebecers as much less willing than other Canadians to tolerate cultural differences.

The overriding intergroup-relations issue in Quebec was over "reasonable accommodation" of minority groups. It was triggered by a series of incidents involving members of minorities, often Muslim immigrants, and brought to a head by the comments of provincial opposition leader Mario Dumont, who asked whether the majority French Québecois group had gone so far in accommodating diverse practices that they stood at risk of losing their own culture.

Although Jews were not the main focus of the discussion, a number of incidents took place in recent years that involved Jews or Jewish institutions, and so Jews were drawn ineluctably into the debate. There were complaints that Hasidic men refused to take driving examinations with female evaluators or deal with female police officers; that Jewish teachers in public schools got paid time off for religious holidays; that a YWCA was badgered to frost its windows so that male Hasidic students from a nearby yeshiva could not view women in exercise garb (after about a year the frosting was removed); and that Jewish General Hospital refused to allow two ambulance drivers to bring their nonkosher lunches into the kosher cafeteria (the hospital was later fined $10,000 for this by the Quebec Human Rights Commission.)

Both the electronic and print media covered the issue extensively, often in provocative, even inflammatory, terms. Then the small town of Herouville—a place unlikely to attract members of minority groups—issued a public manifesto setting out what it expected of minorities who wanted to settle there.

Amid all the fuss, the Quebec government, in February, set up a com-
mission to evaluate the situation and make recommendations. In his announcement, Premier Charest referred to four examples indicating why a commission was needed, three involving Jews: the hospital cafeteria incident, guidelines given to female police officers not to deal with Hasidic men, and the frosted window at the Y. Charest declared that “these are not reasonable accommodations. These are arrangements contrary to the values of our nation.” He added that immigrants must adapt to Quebec values. *CJN* columnist Gil Troy argued in March that the whole idea was flawed because it assumed that the majority collectively defines a culture to which minorities must adapt, signifying that minorities had no rights of their own. Troy called for a “glorious collaboration” to build a civil society.

The commission, consisting of academics Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, went on the road for months, holding hearings in various parts of the province. Many of the hearings, which were televised, afforded an opportunity for the expression of very hostile and intolerant views toward minority groups and their practices. CJC regional president Victor Goldbloom said that “we are obviously uncomfortable with the way the hearings are unfolding,” and Rabbi Reuben Poupko called the “very painful” hearings “a magnet for the most extreme and dangerous voices in Quebec. That people have the confidence to say what they do in public has shocked me.” Poupko also lamented the absence of public denunciations of the expressed intolerance. B’nai Brith’s national legal counsel, Steven Slimovitch, said the hearings had “turned into a soapbox for venting racism.”

In a brief on immigration policy submitted to a legislative committee in October, CJC and Jewish Immigrant Aid Services said that prospective immigrants to Quebec should be asked to sign a “moral contract” to accept the province’s “common values.” CJC filed another brief the next month with the Bouchard-Taylor commission urging the government not to amend the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. This request was aimed at Premier Charest’s suggestion that the charter be amended to give gender equality precedence over religious freedom; CJC rejected the concept of a hierarchy of rights. The brief also systematically refuted the many allegations against Jews made during the hearings, including the charge that all consumers pay more for food products because of kosher certification. It stressed the community’s determination to maintain kashrut and holiday observances at its institutions with no diminution of respect for non-Jewish staff and patients.

In an appearance before the commission, Victor Goldbloom of the CJC
defended the practice of government funding of Jewish day schools on the grounds that they taught the required curriculum and performed a public service. He also justified the wearing of religious symbols by individuals who worked in the public service. B’nai Brith’s commission brief bucked the tide of public opinion by urging greater accommodation of religious practices in the public sphere, not less. CJN columnist Gerald Gall was pessimistic, expressing the fear that the commission’s work “will result in diminished accommodation for minority religious beliefs and practices.”

The commission was expected to report its conclusions early in 2008. In the meantime, some changes were enacted at Jewish institutions. In April the Jewish General Hospital announced it was setting up nonkosher sections in its cafeterias for people who brought their own food. It also settled the case of the complaining ambulance drivers by paying each of them $7,500. (The Human Rights Commission had originally assessed a $10,000 fine for religious discrimination and restricting access to public places.) In addition, the Jewish Rehabilitation Hospital decided to “review its dietary practices” in the wake of complaints by a doctor, other staff, patients, and visitors about Passover restrictions. Meanwhile, another case involving the Jewish General Hospital went to the Quebec Human Rights Tribunal. It accused the institution of discriminating against female employees by accommodating patient wishes to receive “intimate care” by a person of their own sex. In October, the tribunal ordered the hospital and the employees union to pay $15,000 to two female patient attendants who had not been given the opportunity to work as orderlies.

In December, the Supreme Court of Canada announced a landmark decision. It upheld a judgment for damages against a man who had withheld a get (Jewish divorce) from his wife for 15 years after they had obtained a civil divorce, thus preventing her from remarrying and having more children. The court, by a 7-2 margin, held that it was a matter of enforcing a civil contract, not a decision based on religion, because the husband had previously agreed in writing to deliver the get at the time of the civil divorce.

Montreal Hasidim who spent vacation time in the nearby Laurentian Mountains encountered problems in their relations with the local inhabitants. For example, a Satmar group bought a resort in the town of St. Adolphe d’Howard to accommodate members of the community who wanted to spend the summer in the mountains. But the director general of the town expressed concern, saying, “Honestly, we believe that there will be anxiety over this community, which will not integrate into the com-
A community of St. Adolphe, making a sort of ghetto of this complex.” An apology followed a week later. In September, Belz Hasidim appealed to Quebec’s top court against a judgment that houses that were being used as a synagogue and a school in Val Morin violated zoning laws. At a regional hearing of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission that same month, numerous citizens expressed a variety of complaints against the Hasidim in their midst, focusing on the way they separated themselves from their neighbors.

David Moyal of Toronto launched cases in the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal alleging that his landlord had prevented him from erecting a sukkah on the holiday of Sukkot. He charged that he had suffered discrimination and that the enjoyment of his apartment had been diminished.

In Winnipeg, the family of Sam Golubchuk, an Orthodox Jew, was fighting in December to keep him on life support despite the decision of the physician and hospital to remove him because of minimal brain function and no hope of recovery. The family claimed that such a move would violate his religious principles. As the year ended, the issue was not yet resolved.

**Culture**

What used to be the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts in Montreal was renamed the Segal Centre for the Performing Arts at The Saidye, as the result of a major gift from Leaor and Alvin Segal. After major renovations, the centerpiece remained the theater, but there were also venues for many different kinds of performances, including music, dance, and film, as well as educational activities. An Academy of Performing Arts for students was also part of the new complex.

Toronto’s Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company, a nonprofit professional organization, announced it would begin presenting plays in 2008. Artistic directors David Eisner and Avery Saltzman said they wanted to “illuminate humanity through a Jewish perspective.”

*Antigone: Insurgency* by Adam Seelig opened in Toronto in November. Seelig adapted the ancient Greek play to deal with the current terrorist threat. The play dealt with the question of how to maintain democratic principles in a time of war and how to balance national security and individual rights. Hannah Moscovitch’s new play *East of Berlin*, which opened in Toronto in October, was about the son of a Nazi doctor who tries, after the war, to deal with his father’s guilt.

The Toronto Jewish Film Festival in May presented a number of doc-
umentaries, many with Holocaust themes. *Once a Nazi*, by Frederic Bo-
bot and Evan Beloff, told the story of Adalbert Lallier, a concentration
camp guard in the Waffen SS, who immigrated to Canada and lived an
ordinary life as an economics professor. Some 50 years later his con-
science compelled him to disclose what he knew about crimes he had wit-
nessed, and his testimony led to the imprisonment of another former
guard. Montreal’s Jewish Film Festival announced its dissolution after
founder Susan Alper resigned in May. The main reason was a lack of de-
pendable funding. The Voices Forward festival, held in Toronto during
May and June, featured ten films about Palestinians and Israelis.

The world premiere of a documentary about Phyllis Lambert, the ar-
chitect and heritage activist, took place in March. The film, by Teri Wehn-
Damish, traced Lambert’s emotional and professional development.
Israeli Dan Geva’s *Description of a Memory*, an analysis of Israel past
and present, took first prize at the Recontres Internationales du Docu-
mentaire de Montréal in November.

The controversial filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici made *The Lost Tomb
of Jesus*, which appeared on television in Canada and the U.S. In it he
claimed that ossuaries found in a Jerusalem vault were those of Jesus and
his family. In a lecture at a Montreal synagogue in May, Israeli archae-
ologist Eliezer Oren said that scholars would have to take Jacobovici’s
findings seriously but that a number of issues remained open. Other com-
mentators were sharply critical. Another Jacobovici film, *Charging the
Rhino*, premiered on television in November. It chronicled his visit to his
Romanian birthplace and traced the stories of his father and cousin dur-
ing and after the war. Also included was a fascinating interview with an
unrepentant Iron Guard leader.

Igal Hecht had two new films on television. The first, *In the Shadow of
the Messiah*, showed a group of Canadian and Dutch messianic Jews trav-
eling around Israel and trying to explain their views on Jesus to Israelis.
His *Journey of Miracles* was about Canadian Holocaust survivors trying
to explain their experiences to young people. Hecht’s film *Streets of
Jerusalem* premiered at a Toronto theater in May. He interviewed eight
Jerusalemites—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—about life in the city.
Other films released during the year included Bryan Friedman’s *The
Bodybuilder* and I and Elliot Halpen’s *Vimy Ridge: Heaven to Hell.*

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights, established by the Asper
family in Winnipeg, became the first institution outside Ottawa to be des-
ignated a national museum. The federal government promised to provide
annual funding once the museum would open in 2011. The Jewish Mu-
seum and Archives of British Columbia opened in Vancouver in March. Its collection focused on the development of the province’s community since its founding over a century ago.

Quebecers connected to KlezKanada organized a klezmer cruise down the Dnieper River in Ukraine in May, which visited featured sites of Jewish significance. The National Film Board commissioned Gary Beitel and Barry Lazar to make a film of the trip and provided real-time shots of events on its website. A concert of Sephardi liturgical music, *La Magie du Sacre*, was featured at Montreal’s Festival Sépharade in June. Israeli Yiddish singer Vira Lozinsky made her North American debut at August concerts in Montreal and Toronto, and subsequently performed at the KlezKanada Festival in the Laurentians.

A conference on the poetry of A.M. Klein was held at Montreal’s Concordia University in October. Trent University professor Elizabeth Popham, who was in the process of editing a volume of Klein’s letters, told the attendees that Klein suffered “terrible anxiety about not being accepted” outside the community of immigrant Jews in Canada. Klein’s insecurity eventually led to a breakdown and his withdrawal from creative activity.

Publications

Derek Penslar’s *Israel in History: The Jewish State in Comparative Perspective* analyzed how Israel’s historical development affected its contemporary society. Harold Troper’s *The Rescuer* was about Judy Feld Carr, who, over the course of decades, ran a covert operation to ransom more than 3,000 Jews out of Syria. It was an updated version of his earlier book with a new title.

The 9/11 terror attacks had a profound impact on David Solway, a committed leftist who had supported the Palestinian cause. Afterwards he began to reexamine his convictions, and eventually arrived at conclusions fundamentally at odds with his previous beliefs. In *The Big Lie: On Terror, Antisemitism and Identity*, Solway sounded the alarm on what he considered the Muslim threat to Western civilization. A. Alan Borovoy’s *Categorically Incorrect* dealt with Canada’s response, both foreign and domestic, to the 9/11 attacks. While cognizant of the need to combat terror, Borovoy argued that the laws passed infringed excessively on civil liberties. On the other hand, he criticized the government for an inadequate response overseas.

The Holocaust memoirs published during the year included *163256: A*

There were several nonfiction works on Jewish themes. Among them were The Jews of Windsor, 1790–1990: A Historical Chronicle by Jonathan V. Plaut; A Joyful Harvest: Celebrating the Jewish Contribution to Southern Alberta Life 1889–2005, published by the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta; Anna Porter's Kaszner's Train, about the escape to Switzerland of nearly 1,700 Hungarian Jews that became a controversial issue in Israel well after the war; The Volunteer: A Canadian's Secret Life in the Mossad by Michael Ross; Arguing with the Storm: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers, edited by Rhea Tregebov; Rabbi Reuven Bulka's Turning Grief into Gratitude: Reflections and Recommendations on Mourning and Condolence; Rabbi Gedalia Zweig's Living Kaddish; Thomas Hecht's autobiography written with Joe King, Czech Mate: A Life in Progress; Rather Laugh than Cry by Malka Zipora; and Ann Weinstein's Me and My Tormentor: Saul Bellow—A Memoir of My Literary Love Affair. Other significant nonfiction books were Andrew Cohen's The Unfinished Canadian, The People We Are; Rosalie Wise Sharp's memoir Rifke: An Improbable Life; Misha Aster's The Reichs-Orchestra: The Berlin Philharmonic and National Socialism (in German); Jonathan Garfinkel's Ambivalence: Crossing the Israeli-Palestine Divide; Tilda Shalof's The Making of a Nurse; What is a Canadian? by Irvin Studin; An Apple a Day: The Myths, Misconceptions and Outright Exaggerations About Diet, Nutrition and the Foods We Eat by Joe Schwarcz; and Brothers of Iron by Joe Weider and Ben Weider with Mike Steere.

Fiction works included the first English translation of Yves Theriault's Aaron, translated by Paul Socken and W. Donald Wilson; Notebooks: Selections from the A.M. Klein Papers, edited by Zailig Pollack and Usher Caplan; Anna's Journal by Harry Pollack; A Sharp Intake of Breath by John Miller; Guy Gavriel Kay's Ysabel; Sidura Ludwig's Holding My Breath: A Novel; and Alvin Rakoff's Baldwin Street: A Novel.

There were several books of poetry published. Among them were The Fiery Mountain by Simcha Simchovitch; Black River by Kenneth Sher-
man; *Poetry Pure and Simple* by David Zaretsky; and Pierre Ancil’s translation of the poetry of Sholem Shtern, *Nostalgie et Tristesse*.

Winners of Canadian Jewish Book Awards were Susan Glickman for *The Violin Lover*; Rosemary Sullivan for *Villa Air-Boi*; Eric Koch for *I Remember the Location Exactly*; Bernice Eisenstein for *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*; Carol Matas for *Turned Away: The World War II Diary of Devora Bernstein*; Michael Wex for *Born to Kvetch*; Shirley Kume for *Drunk from the Bitter Truth: The Poems of Anna Margolin*; Rafi Aaron for *Surviving the Censor: The Unspoken Words of Osip Mandelstam*; and Seymour Mayne for *September Rain*. Sherry Simon won the Gabrielle Roy Prize for *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*. David Solway received the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry for *Reaching for Clear: The Poetry of Rhys Savarin*. Faydra Shapiro won a National Jewish Book Award in the U.S. for *Building Jewish Roots: The Israel Experience*.

**Personalia**

Stanley Kershman was appointed to the Superior Court of Justice of Ontario; Audrey Lampert was appointed to the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission; Mark Cohon became commissioner of the Canadian Football League; Sarah Fulford became editor of *Toronto Life* magazine; Marcy Grossman was appointed consul general in Miami; Rabbi Chaim Mendelsohn became the first Jewish military chaplain since World War II; and Israel appointed Amir Gissin and Yoram Elron as consuls general, in Toronto and Montreal, respectively.

The following received the Order of Canada: Companion—Barney Danson; Officers—Chaviva Hosek, Arthur Hiller, Cyril Kay, Jacob Masliyah, Ben Weider, Edward Lyons, and Leon Katz; Members—Howard Engel, Avrum Morrow, Evelyn Shapiro, Muriel Gold, Lola Rasmisky, and Leon Rooke. Naim Kattan was awarded the Prix Hervé Dulune by the Académie Française while Barney Danson received the distinction of being named a chevalier of the French Legion of Honor. Victoria Kaspi received the Rutherford Medal for physics. The federal government named writer A.M. Klein and journalist Hirsch Wolofsky, both deceased, as national historic figures.

Henry Molot received the civil service’s highest honor, the Public Service Award for Excellence. Three filmmakers won an Emmy award for their documentary *Sex Slaves*: Ric Esther Bienstock, Felix Golubev, and Simcha Jacobovici.
Barbara Farber was elected president of the United Israel Appeal Federations Canada, Marc Gold president of Federation CJA in Montreal, and David Koschitzky board chair of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. Rabbi Yonasan Weiss became chief rabbi of Montreal. Victor Goldbloom and Gerry Cutler were elected presidents of the Quebec and Pacific regions, respectively, of the Canadian Jewish Congress, while Daniel Amar and Len Rudner were appointed executive directors of the Quebec and Ontario Regions, respectively. Sara Horowitz was elected president of the Association for Jewish Studies and Dina Kutner was appointed general manager for Canada of El Al Israel Airlines.

Anat Ekhoiz and Carol Leszcz won Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education. Canadian Jewish News writers Paul Lunegen, Norman Ravvin, and Jenny Hazan won Rockower Awards for excellence in Jewish journalism.

A number of well-known members of the community passed away during the year. In January: internationally known Cantor David Bagley, aged 74; pioneering television weatherman Percy Saltzman, aged 91; mathematician, game theorist, and peace activist Anatol Rapoport, aged 95; psychologist and vocational counselor Ruth Borchiver, aged 78; and Sydney Shulemson, the most decorated Canadian Jewish veteran of World War II, aged 91. In February: Abraham Lieff, the first Jew on the Ontario Supreme Court and an expert in family law, aged 103; Quebec pop music promoter Ben Kaye, aged 68; and economist, development specialist, and civil libertarian Irving Brecher, aged 84. In March: family matriarch Helen Steinberg, aged 98; Rabbi Yitzchok Hendel, chief judge of Montreal's bet din and founding head of the city's Lubavitch yeshiva, aged 90; and retired judge Sam Filer of the Superior Court of Justice in Ontario and community leader, aged 71. In April: retired Jewish Family and Child Service director Gordon Wolfe, aged 70; award-winning filmmaker Harry Rasky, aged 78; decorated war veteran and career soldier Sam Cohen, aged 101; and businessman, former CJC president, and community leader Sol Kanee, aged 97. In May: acclaimed novelist and poet Monique Bosco, aged 79; community leader Albert Benchetrit, aged 75; and basketball coach Harvey Liverman, aged 58. In June: Edmund Yehuda Lipsitz, educator, author, and community civil servant, aged 81; and noted composer Oskar Morawetz, aged 90. In July: Carol Goldman, Jewish educator for children with special needs, aged 60; businessman and theater impresario Edwin “Honest Ed” Mirvish, aged 92; Leonard Mendelssohn, professor of Hasidic literature, aged 70; Sara Pachter, who led 100 tours to Israel, aged 93; and Bluma Appel, philanthropist, arts
patron, and social activist, aged 86. In September: journalist and broadcaster Sidney Katz, aged 91; and advertising executive and political strategist Menachem Dunsky, aged 77. In October: lawyer and community leader Samuel Godinsky, aged 101; and retired educator and community executive Harold Malitzky, aged 80. In November: pioneering geriatrician Dr. Ruhla Brohovici, aged 102; and comedy writer Mel Tolkin, aged 94. In December: businessman and former mayor of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Joseph Zatzman, aged 95; Michael Lawrence (Larry) Bessner, war veteran, professor, and community leader, aged 86; and former MP Milton Klein, aged 97.

Harold M. Waller