ARMENIAN-CANADIAN CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

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Category: Opinions

Toronto Nov. 22, 2014--The Armenian-Canadian Conservative Association (ACCA) was launched with great enthusiasm and optimism as more than 80 people attended the auspicious occasion here. Attendees included Minister Jason Kenney, Costas Menegakis the federal Parliamentary Secretary, five Members of Parliament, two candidates for the next parliamentary elections, civil society organizations, ethnic community representatives, and various representatives of local Armenian community organizations.

After welcoming the guests and ACCA members, master of the ceremonies and member of the board Diran Tutunjian made a brief introduction of the Association's purpose and philosophy. He said: "The Armenian-Canadian Conservative Association is a pan-Armenian association established to work with all Canadians to build a stronger Canada, and to make sure our values and our goals, such as equality, justice, freedom of speech, thought, and religion are reflected in our relationships with one another."

After introducing the newly-elected board, Mr. Tutunjian invited Vice-chair Sevan Hajinian to introduce keynote speaker the Hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism. "Through his strong faith and moral fortitude not only did Mr. Kenney shape his future and his political career, but he also shaped the future of the Conservative Party and touched everyone's life he worked with and associated with him. His humanitarianism, straight talk, and sincerity are other remarkable aspects of the man," said Ms. Hajinian.

Hon. Kenney talked about the current concerns of Canadians, next year's federal elections, economic prosperity, the steadfast stand of the government about the challenges Canadians and the civilized world face vis-a-vis religious extremism, the fate of Middle East minorities, and his admiration of the Canadian-Armenian community.

Mr. Kenney emphasized that the Canadian-Armenian community and the Conservative Party share many priorities such as strong family values, a firm belief in the rule of law, in democracy, free enterprise, free speech, tolerance, and humanism. Thus cooperation between both sides to uphold and promote these cherished values and the traditions is a natural development, said Hon. Kenney. He also praised the Canadian-Armenian community's strong work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit. He touched upon the long history of the Armenian people and its resilience to survive under harsh conditions.

Hon. Kenney also talked about his recent trip to Armenia, his impressions of the country and its people, and his visit to Khor Virab where the founder of the Armenian Church, St. Gregory the Illuminator, was imprisoned in the 4th century because of his Christian faith. Finally, Minister Kenney

talked about his co-sponsorship of the Armenian Genocide recognition resolution in the House of Commons in 2004 and Prime Minister Stephen Harper's principled stand and moral fortitude in making Armenian Genocide recognition Canadian government policy. Minister Kenney's speech was received with standing ovation and lengthy applause.

Mr. Costas Menegakis**,** Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Member of Parliament for Richmond Hill, welcomed the formation of the Association and congratulated the Canadian-Armenians for their visionary initiative.

Other politicians who attended the establishment of the ACCA included Members of Parliament Joe Daniel (Don Valley East), John Carmichael (Don Valley West), the Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill), Corneliu Chisu (Scarborough East), Patrick Brown (Barrie), and Conservative candidates Michael Parsa (Richmond Hill) and Maureen Harquail (Don Valley East).

Also attending the gathering were Councillor Godwin Chan (Richmond Hill), community leaders Dino Sophocleous (PESKA International and Cypriot Community), Rev. Majed El Shafie (Founder / President, One Free World International), Rabea Allos (Chaldean community), George E. Khouri, Harry Tsai (Canadian Federation of Conservative Organizations), and Kan Kenga and Roshan Nallaratnam (Tamil Conservative Association).

Earlier in the day, the Association held its inaugural meeting and elected its board. Tamar Minassian, board executive secretary, presided over the meeting

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