



## The Canadian Islamic Congress

CIC is the independent voice of Canada's Muslims  
-- Suni and Shi'a, Men and Women, Youth and Seniors.

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### CIC Scholarship Fund Gets Big Boost at Montreal Fundraising Dinner

by Yahya Abdul Rahman -

Montreal September 26, 2004 (MMN): On Friday September 24th the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) hosted a fundraising dinner in Montreal with guest speaker Dr. Munir El-Kassem from London, Ontario.

The theme of the event was "Islam and Muslims in Canada: Vision 2020," and the purpose was to raise funds for CIC's various ongoing projects including the funding of student scholarships - valued at \$3000 each - which seek to encourage Muslim students to pursue studies in journalism, political science or general social sciences and law.

Traditionally in the Muslim community, students have been drawn to such fields as engineering, medicine, and computer science, while only a small number of them have chosen to pursue careers in the areas of media, law, social work, or political science. The goal of the CIC scholarship fund is to change this as Muslims are under-represented in these important fields.

At the dinner pledges were made for 16 scholarships with one individual promising to fund 4 scholarships by the year 2020. In addition, a local Muslim organization, JFM, earlier pledged to fund two full scholarships. This brings to total 22 pledges for scholarships for 2004 or \$66,000.

The Montreal event was moderated by Bilal Hamideh, who is the CIC representative for the Quebec region.

The evening began with a recitation from the Holy Quran by Imam Izzet Sahin of the Message of Islam Foundation. There was then a brief power-point presentation outlining some of the past accomplishments of CIC and its ongoing work.

This was followed by brief presentations from local community activists including Samaa Elibyari, CIC Board Member, long-time community activist and host of the weekly radio show Caravan, Salam Elmenyawi, President of the Muslim Council of Montreal, and Dr. Mohamed Nekili, former CIC regional representative for Quebec, who was visiting from Waterloo Ontario.

Elibyari praised CIC for its all inclusiveness regardless of one's age, gender or affiliation. She also encouraged her listeners to not just be spectators in what is going on in the world, but to become involved citizens.

Elmenyawi stated that it is important that the community give support to all Muslim institutions and that even if we don't agree 100% with everything they do, it is still important to get involved as complete consensus on every single issue can never be achieved. He also encouraged people to get involved in media work and defending Muslims. Elmenyawi noted a fatwa from Dr. Yusuf Al Qaradawi which stated that those who are working in those fields that defend Muslims, including media, are eligible for the zakat.

Dr. Nekili noted that the idea of the scholarship fund originated in Montreal with Zuhair Azziz who initiated the idea and, as a result of his pioneering work, the scholarship program has grown to what it is today. He also noted that the community needs to "strategically invest" in those careers which can place Muslims in leadership roles in Canada so that they can contribute to shaping public opinion.

Dr. El-Kassem spoke of the difficult social and political landscape Muslims are navigating in this country, and that they must return to the sources of their religion - the Quran and Sunnah - and not rely solely on their opinions or the opinions of ignorant and uneducated people who are speaking in the name of Islam but possess no qualifications to do so.

The speech was followed by a dinner - which was catered by Sabria Hussien and several of her helpers - and a draw for door prizes consisting of two books.

On August 30th CIC issued a media communiqué stating that ten students - seven women and three men - received CIC scholarships this year alone and will be studying media, law, social work, and political science at Canadian universities.

The communiqué noted that five of this year's CIC scholars are from the Greater Toronto Area, two are from Montreal, and one each is from Calgary, Ottawa, and London.

In Montreal CIC scholarship recipient Amal Al-Masri is studying Political Science at McGill University, and Ma'an Abdul Rahman is studying Law at the University of Montreal.

The newly chosen CIC scholars will be honoured at the CIC's annual Ottawa Gala dinner in early October and will receive an initial cheque there for \$1,500. The remaining \$1,500 will be given after each scholar contributes 100 hours of volunteer community work, to be completed within 12 months.

Those who would like to contribute to the CIC scholarship fund can still do so by sending their donation to: Canadian Islamic Congress, 420 Erb St. W., Suite 424, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 6K6. CIC also can be contacted by phone at (519) 746-1242 or via their website at: <http://www.canadianislamiccongress.com> Pledge forms can be found online at: <http://www.montrealmuslimnews.net/cicpledge.htm>

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