Canada

National Affairs

Canada enjoyed solid economic growth in 2005 with declining unemployment, low inflation, and an appreciating currency. Rising world prices for oil and natural gas were beneficial to a country that still depended heavily on its natural resources. In political terms, however, the Liberal minority government of Prime Minister Paul Martin maintained power by only a slim margin through most of the year, and then succumbed to a vote of no confidence in November, when the three opposition parties banded together to defeat the government. As a result, a general election was called for January 2006, with campaigning well underway as the year drew to a close.

One of the more contentious political issues during the year involved the passage of a bill legalizing same-sex marriage. Justice Minister Irwin Cotler, who was responsible for shepherding the bill through the House of Commons, tried to deflect the opposition that came from religious groups. Cotler, who is Jewish, pointed out that the bill protected religious freedom by providing that churches and synagogues refusing to perform such marriages or declining to rent their facilities to celebrate them would not lose their charitable status. Even so, Orthodox rabbis and lay groups expressed strong opposition, denouncing the legislation “as a dangerous experiment in social engineering that is not benign to the greater society.” Rabbi Baruch Taub, speaking for that coalition, reiterated the traditional definition of marriage as “the union of a man and a woman.”

In a most unusual move, the Supreme Court of Canada sharply condemned attorney Guy Bertrand for his conduct on behalf of his client, Rwandan exile Leon Mugesera, who sought refuge in Canada. The latter was accused of genocide and incitement against Rwanda’s Tutsi minority, and faced deportation from Canada and criminal charges in his homeland. In his filings, the lawyer alleged a “Jewish” conspiracy between Justice Minister Cotler and the CJC (Canadian Jewish Congress) to push for deportation (see AJYB 2005, p. 286). After unanimously upholding the deportation order in June, the court described Bertrand’s motion and supporting documents as “unprofessional and unacceptable,” and expressed shock that they included “anti-Semitic sentiment and views that
most might have thought had disappeared from Canadian society, and
even more so from legal debate in Canada.” Bertrand, unbowed, vowed
that he would not “hide the truth because an ethnic group is powerful”
and contended that he “was crucified in public.” In August, the Quebec
Bar Association charged Bertrand with violating its code of ethics by
making “prejudicial, irresponsible, excessive and unjustified” statements.
Bertrand pleaded guilty, and the association, in December, reprimanded
him for his actions. Earlier, he sent a letter of apology to Cotler.

A self-styled marijuana crusader, Marc Emery, out on bail while fac-
ing possible extradition to the U.S., received withering criticism for a posting on his cannabisculture.com Web site that denounced Justice Minister Cotler as a “Nazi-Jew” and a “disgrace to his Jewish roots.” Emery then reconsidered and determined that “capo” was a more appropriate term.

Jewish groups were taken by surprise when Ontario premier Dalton
McGuinty announced in September that his government would ban reli-
gious arbitration, thereby reversing a policy in place since 1991. The de-
cision was made in the context of Muslim requests for recognition of
arbitration based on sharia, Islamic law, and was motivated largely by op-
position to that system’s subordination of women. But the change ap-
peared to have broader implications. Ontario’s Jews had been using two
battei din, religious courts, for arbitration, one for commercial matters
and the other for divorces, and it was unclear whether, under the new pol-
icy, their decisions would enforceable. McGuinty said that faith-based ar-
britrations “threaten our common ground” and proclaimed that “there will
be no religious arbitration in Ontario. There will be one law for all On-
tarians.” When the draft bill was unveiled in November, Jewish leaders
expressed relief that it referred only to family issues, and thus arbitration
of non-family cases, such as business disputes, would still be enforceable.
Similarly, procedures for the issuance of a Jewish divorce would not
change. The government’s move was popular with Canadians. Polls
showed that 63 percent opposed allowing religious tribunals to adjudi-
cate family disputes. No action was taken on the proposal before the end
of the year.

Former Quebec cabinet minister Richard Le Hir revealed in May that
before the 1995 referendum on the province’s secession he had acted as
an intermediary between Premier Jacques Parizeau and the Jewish com-
munity. He said he had asked Senator Leo Kolber, a Jew, to prevail upon
community leader Charles Bronfman to remain quiet during the pre-
referendum period, and in exchange assured Kolber that Parizeau would
meet with community leaders. Bronfman did remain silent, though not
necessarily because of any agreement, but Parizeau never met with the Jewish leaders, whose community staunchly opposed secession. The current Parti Québécois leader, André Boisclair, in a Canadian Jewish News (CJN) interview, promised to meet with Jewish community leaders and spoke of his personal relationships with many Quebec Jews.

Justice Minister Cotler participated in the Maccabiah games in Israel as a member of the Canadian senior table tennis team; he was eliminated in his first match.

**Terrorism**

Boaz Ganor, an Israeli terrorism expert, warned the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC) in November that Canada was a "soft target" and that Osama bin Laden had mentioned Canada as a terrorist objective. He contended that "international jihadist terrorism represents the biggest threat and challenge to humanity in modern times, more so than the cold war." Regarding Canada, he doubted that its neutrality and ethnic diversity would insulate it from attack, and warned of the possibility that Canadian Muslims could be recruited by terrorist organizations. He also testified before a House of Commons subcommittee.

Israel's consul general in Toronto, Ya'acov Brosh, got into trouble for saying, in May, that while not all Muslims were terrorists, most terrorists were Muslim. After protests from Muslim leaders, the Department of Foreign Affairs called in Israel's ambassador for a discussion. As a consequence, Mr. Brosh agreed to meet with Muslim representatives "to clarify the matter," and issued a statement of regret.

Prime Minister Martin unequivocally condemned Hamas during a June interview with the Canadian Jewish News. He said, "Hamas are terrorists. Period. Terrorism is incompatible with democracy. They should lay down their arms." Earlier, Canada placed the Israeli group Kahane Chai (Kach) on its terrorist list, along with groups based in Iran and Afghanistan. In a statement, the Ministry of Public Safety declared that Kahane Chai "aims to intimidate and threaten Palestinian families...." The group had no known presence in Canada.

A terror suspect held in Vancouver since 2001 was expected to go free because his alleged accomplice, convicted terrorist Ahmed Ressam, was no longer cooperating with authorities in the U.S. His testimony was crucial to the case against Samir Ait Mohamed, who, the government contended, had planned to bomb Orthodox Jews in the Montreal suburb of Outremont. Another Montreal man, Naji Antoine Abi Khalil, pleaded guilty in Arkansas to three counts of an indictment alleging that he
planned to ship military equipment to Hezballah in Lebanon. He was also convicted separately for money laundering.

Israel and the Middle East

Canada tried to maintain foreign-policy balance by expressing support for Israel on numerous occasions while also carefully preserving good ties with the Arab world. After years of complaints from the Jewish community that Canada's voting record at the UN was biased against Israel, the government, in the second half of 2004, showed signs of a shift, abstaining on rather than supporting a number of motions hostile to Israel (see AJYB 2005, p. 291).

This change did not pass unnoticed by those unsympathetic to Israel. Sen. Marcel Prud'homme implied, in a speech on the floor of the Senate, that it was actually Justice Minister Cotler, not the foreign minister, who made Canada's policy. He asked whether Cotler "is responsible in cabinet for vetting every word, comma, and paragraph of anything pertaining to the Middle East." The Canadian Islamic Congress raised similar complaints in August, and also asserted that the appointment of "strong pro-Israel voices" such as Jonathan Schneiderman as the foreign minister's Middle East adviser and Sen. Leo Kolber as chair of a new advisory council on national security might make Canada's Muslims uneasy.

In fact, Canada's UN voting record did not change very much. In the General Assembly session in December, Canada voted the same way it had in 2004 on the vast majority of the resolutions that came to a vote. Although Gilbert Laurin, the country's second-ranking UN delegate, described the annual crop of anti-Israel resolutions as "divisive and unhelpful," the delegation voted for 13 of them, opposed four, and abstained on one. The net change from 2004 was an increase of three negative votes and a decrease of two abstentions. And at the UN Human Rights Commission, Canada switched its vote on one resolution to side with Israel. Reportedly, Canada also worked behind the scenes to tone down some of the UN resolutions that it ultimately supported.

York University law professor Anne Bayefsky addressed Israel's treatment at the UN in a speech she gave in Toronto in March. Charging that "discrimination against Israel at the UN has turned to demonization," Bayefsky pointed to a consistent double standard in both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Commission, and called upon her audience to "expose the hypocrisy." Speaking in Montreal in August, Israel's UN ambassador, Dan Gillerman, acknowledged "some movement in favor of Israel" by Canada, but added, "I just wish Canada would fol-
low the American line more often than the European line," since many countries looked to Canada as a "conscience and a compass."

In March, Pierre Pettigrew, minister of foreign affairs, sharply condemned Israel shortly after returning from a Middle East visit that included the laying of a wreath at Yasir Arafat's gravesite. Pettigrew expressed disappointment over Israel's decision to add 3,500 new residences to the town of Ma'aleh Adumim, beyond the Green Line, stated that Canada regarded the settlements as inconsistent with international law, and urged Israel to reconsider. In August, Jacques Saada, minister for the Francophonie, announced that Canada would propose the admittance of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to that organization of states with large numbers of French speakers.

As the dispute over Iran's attempt to acquire nuclear weapons heated up and Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad issued threats to destroy Israel, Alan Baker, the Israeli ambassador, urged Canada to take a prominent role in mobilizing international opposition. The leaders of all three major national parties expressed their deep concern, and the House of Commons passed a unanimous resolution in October denouncing Ahmadinejad's threat to "wipe Israel off the map." Earlier in the year, in April, representatives of all the parties came together for an evening of music and poetry in an Ottawa synagogue dedicated to the condemnation of suicide bombing.

In a major speech to the General Assembly (GA) of the United Jewish Communities, held in Toronto in November, Prime Minister Martin condemned one-sided UN resolutions, identified Israel's values with those of Canada, and denounced the Iranian president's call for the obliteration of Israel. Martin received criticism from both sides. Some Jewish leaders said it was hypocritical to criticize UN resolutions after Canada voted for most of them, while the acting president of the Canadian Arab Federation rejected the comparison of Canadian and Israeli values, charging that Israel violated international law and did not respect human rights.

An old issue arose once more when the government decided to recall passports that listed the holder's birthplace as "Jerusalem, Israel," with the intention of deleting the country name. While the general practice was to list a city and country, an exception would now be made for Jerusalem because of the unresolved legal status of the city. A Toronto teenager born in Jerusalem, Eliyahu Veffer, responded with a lawsuit against the government for seeking to delete the country name "Israel" from his passport. In a statement to the Canadian Jewish News, the Department of Foreign Affairs said that "inscriptions such as 'Jerusalem, Israel' would
be contrary to Canada’s Middle East policy” and also cited Security Council resolutions and international law. Israeli ambassador Baker contended that the decision was political rather than legal.

Trade and commercial ties between Canada and Israel continued to flourish. India, China, Israel, and Brazil joined Canada in a new venture to promote collaborative high-tech research and development, to be called the International Science and Technology Partnerships Program. The $20 million allocated by the government for this project was the first such appropriation by Canada to support multilateral cooperation. Israel also signed a science and technology agreement with Ontario in April that would cover about a dozen joint projects over three years.

There were a number of efforts to hurt Israel economically, coming mainly from churches, unions, and leftist organizations. At the triennial convention of the Canadian Labor Congress in Montreal in June, several unions, mainly those of public-sector employees, introduced a resolution calling upon Israel to take down its security fence and to terminate its “illegal” settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The resolution was referred to the organization’s executive council. In December, a group calling itself Coalition pour la Justice et la Paix en Palestine (Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine), consisting of some 20 Quebec organizations—including several labor unions—announced a campaign to boycott Israeli products, as well as firms seen as supporting Israel’s “apartheid politics.” The boycott received little media coverage, and the major Jewish organizations in Montreal jointly attacked the announcement as “a call for abject intolerance, blatant revisionism, and terrible injustice.”

A number of Protestant denominations—including the United Church of Canada, the country’s largest—as well as five splinter Jewish groups were among the 50 sponsors of a conference held in Toronto in October to discuss divestment from Israel. It was held on behalf of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, whose head, Anglican canon Naim Ateek, addressed the gathering and called for a nonviolent, that is, economic, intifada. Ruth Klein of B’nai Brith Canada (BBC) attacked the conference as a “blatant propaganda” exercise that harmed Christian-Jewish relations, and BBC countered with a simultaneous conference of its own that featured four American Christian leaders who spoke about “morally responsible” investment in Israel. Earlier in the year, the Anglican Church in Canada had decided not to divest “at this time.”

On March 30, high-ranking law-enforcement officials from various Ontario cities traveled to Israel to meet with their Israeli counterparts for
discussions about counterterrorism and security. Leading the trip was Monte Kwinter, the province's community safety minister; the sponsors were the CJC, the Toronto UJA Federation, and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. Later in the year, Khaled Mouammar, who lived in a Toronto suburb, filed a complaint with the York Region's Police Services Board about the participation of the local police chief. He argued that since Israel was an "outlaw state" and the chief was now perceived as having taken sides in the Arab-Israel dispute, he could no longer treat Muslims fairly. The board dismissed the complaint. A similar complaint, also unsuccessful, was filed in Hamilton, and led to a chaotic public meeting punctuated by inflamed rhetoric from pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel speakers.

El Al Israel Airlines threatened to terminate its Toronto-Tel Aviv service because the very high landing fees—reaching $12,000 per flight, compared to about $3,000 in Israel—made the route uneconomical. But El Al also received criticism from Israel's Ministry of Tourism for not having enough flights on the route and for charging too much. The number of Canadian tourists visiting Israel had risen rapidly since 2001.

A federal court judge upheld an Immigration and Refugee Board decision granting refugee status to an anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox rabbi who claimed that he would be endangered if deported to his native Israel. Justice Michel Beaudry found in February that Rabbi Erez Shlomo Elbarnes had been persecuted for his views and that Israel was unable or unwilling to protect him from future persecution. Elbarnes was convicted in the U.S. in 1994 for kidnapping a teenager in a dispute over the boy's upbringing, served two years in prison, and was then deported to Israel. He came to Canada in 2000 (see AJYB 2005, p. 292).

David Ouellette created a primarily French Web site, Judeoscope.Ca, which covered a range of Jewish issues, focusing especially on the Israeli-Arab conflict and developments within Islam. He claimed that it was "the first and only Web site dealing with such issues, with exclusive stories about what's going on in Islamic and Islamist organizations."

The purchase of the Jerusalem Post, the Israeli English-language daily, on a fifty-fifty basis by the Canadian company CanWest Global Communications and Israeli businessman Eli Azur had been announced in December 2004. However, according to CanWest executive Leonard Asper, Azur went ahead and bought the newspaper on his own, in violation of the partnership agreement. Asper went to court in New York while Azur asked for judicial relief in Jerusalem, Azur claiming that "there has never been an agreement signed between us and CanWest."
Anti-Israel sentiment and activity continued to flourish at Canada’s universities. Although Israel’s supporters were better organized than in the past—nearly 300 Jewish students from 32 colleges and universities convened in Montreal in January for a strategy conference—they had to contend with the reality that the Palestinian cause was more popular than Israel’s. After a study of the attitudes of U.S. graduate students appeared that showed high levels of hostility to Israel, Lance Davis, director of National Jewish Campus Life, claimed that a similar study in Canada would show the same pattern.

A high-profile Israeli Apartheid Week took place in February at the University of Toronto sponsored by the Arab Students Collective, which represented seven constituent groups. It was clearly scheduled to counter Hillel’s annual IsraelFEST, held that same week, which stressed non-political aspects of Israeli life such as science, art, and culture. Hillel leaders complained that the Apartheid Week plans were a deliberate attempt to draw attention away from an event that depicted Israel in a positive light. The Canadian Coalition for Democracies issued a press release in January asking why the university “is hosting an antiapartheid forum that vilifies a demonstrably nonapartheid state.” BBC executive vice president Frank Dimant met with university officials to advocate their “obligation to help stop the growth of anti-Semitism on campus.” But the university declined to act, citing free-speech concerns. It did, however, force a change in location, moving the Arab-sponsored event away from the space adjacent to Hillel’s Wolfond Centre, where it had originally been scheduled. In the end, the anti-Zionist demonstration and lectures did not attract a large crowd.

The cancellation of former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech at Montreal’s Concordia University in 2002 in the face of a riot by anti-Israel students (see AJYB 2003, pp. 310–12) continued to reverberate in several ways. Ever since that debacle, pro-Israel students at Concordia had sought to bring a high-profile Israeli speaker to the campus. With Netanyahu unavailable because of his ministerial duties, they prevailed upon Concordia’s rector to invite former prime minister Ehud Barak. The university, eager to head off a confrontation, first suggested an off-campus site, but after Barak refused such an arrangement, a secure campus venue was arranged. However, Barak, in the end, declined, citing scheduling problems. Yves Engler, one of the student ring-leaders of the protest against Netanyahu, was suspended from the
university in 2004 for five years. He asked the Quebec Superior Court to overturn the ban, but failed to convince the judge of the merits of his case. The court found, in March 2005, that Concordia had properly followed its own regulations in disciplining Engler, and that he had repeatedly defied earlier, shorter suspensions from the campus for his actions.

Also in March, Netanyahu, now Israel's finance minister, addressed over 600 students from ten universities by means of a video connection from Jerusalem. He told them that Israel's enemies considered the country guilty because of its very existence, not its actions, and that "if any people have a right to a piece of land, it is we in Israel."

History professor David Noble of York University, a Jew already known for his anti-Israel activism, had launched a campaign in 2004 to have his university abandon its longstanding policy of closing on the High Holy Days. President Laura Marsden referred the matter to the university senate in 2005, and it recommended no change in the practice.

In October and November, hundreds of anti-Semitic pamphlets entitled "Jewish Supremacism Unmasked" were found inserted into library materials at three institutions in the Toronto area, York and Ryerson universities and the University of Toronto. Afterward, an open letter to the University of Toronto appeared on former Klansman David Duke's Web site, signed with a pseudonym. The writer said that "I and a small group of my fellow students have dared to distribute a little piece of paper that dares to expose Jewish supremacism," and added attacks on Israel and Jewish neoconservatives in the U.S.

In January and February, Israeli ambassador Alan Baker spoke to Jewish college students in Vancouver and Toronto, urging them to inform themselves about the facts in the Middle East. But at a panel discussion in Toronto in March on "Being Jewish on Campus," social work professor Nora Gold argued that knowing facts was not enough. She asserted that "the Jewish community for the most part doesn't understand the left, and can't relate to the left," a severe disadvantage in coping with a campus environment that was predominantly leftist. Since, she said, "if you want to go into the jungle in a foreign community, you need a local guide," Gold urged community leaders to make strategic investments to involve Jewish professors and students on campuses where they constituted a critical mass.

Anti-Semitism and Racism

Recognizing the growing threat of anti-Semitism, a group of prominent non-Jewish Canadian business leaders undertook an initiative to
promote tolerance. Some 20 top executives from the country’s largest corporations, led by Tony Comper, president of the Bank of Montreal, and his wife, Elizabeth Comper, established FAST (Fighting Anti-Semitism Together) in May. Their initial announcement, acknowledging that “2004 was the worst year in more than half a century for vicious anti-Jewish activity in this country,” promised Jews that “they are not alone and on their own.” One short-term goal of FAST was the development of a curriculum-based learning program about anti-Semitism for the public schools. Mrs. Comper told the Canadian Jewish News that “this isn’t just a Jewish issue. This is an issue of every single person living in Canada.” Mr. Comper, in an address to the Empire Club in Toronto in June, described the crisis, explained why it “must be resolved by non-Jews,” and promised Jews that theirs would not be “a lonely battle—as it has so often been for so many, for so long.” In a National Post article, he stressed the importance of educating young people so that Jewish children would no longer “grow up in fear of the people around them.”

In March, the federal government unveiled an action plan to thwart racist activities. Announcing the initiative, called “A Canada for All,” Justice Minister Cotler explained that four government departments would be involved. Among the specific proposals were standardizing the collection of hate-crimes data, combating hate messages on the Internet, and dealing adequately with the needs of victims of hate crimes. While the CJC welcomed the initiative, Executive Vice President Manuel Prutschi noted that anti-Semitism was not mentioned specifically and that the plan did not address the importation of racist attitudes from abroad generated by conflicts in other parts of the world. In August, the provincial government of Ontario extended funding for its Hate Crime Extremism Investigative Team for another year, and doubled the number of local police departments involved to ten.

In February, in a Toronto courtroom, Christopher McBride, who already had a criminal record, pleaded guilty to the 2002 murder of David Rosenzweig (see AJYB 2003, p. 313). At the time, McBride was drunk and enraged over a matter that had nothing to do with Rosenzweig. The court did not definitively find that the victim was singled out because he was Jewish, but within the community it was widely believed that that was part of the motivation. The prosecutor stressed that the area in which the crime took place was crowded that night with obviously religious Jews. The defendant was sentenced to life for second-degree murder, with no possibility of parole for 15 years.

Two of the teenage boys responsible for a series of vandalism incidents in 2004 against cemeteries, synagogues, a school, and the UJA Federa-
tion building along Toronto’s Bathurst Street (see AJYB 2005, pp. 298–99) were convicted in April of mischief, but acquitted of the more serious charges of promoting hate and targeting religious property. On behalf of the CJC, Ontario chair Joel Richler said, “we are disappointed the judge felt the legal level of bias required for conviction was not met.” Frank Dimant of BBC, echoing those sentiments, contended that the acts were not “merely youthful pranks” and asked, “what message does this send to today’s youth?” The two boys were sentenced in June to two years of probation and ordered to pay $2,000 in restitution, volunteer in the community, attend a Holocaust education program, and write a letter of apology to the Canadian Jewish News. BBC, UJA Federation, and the CJC all condemned the sentence as too light.

Another of the vandals, 19-year-old Steven Vandezemey, was tried separately in June, and pleaded guilty to five counts of mischief as part of a plea bargain. After apologizing in court for his actions, he was sentenced to six months of house arrest and two years of probation, and ordered to pay $3,000 in restitution. Joel Richler again expressed dismay, saying that the government’s acceptance of the plea bargain was a “disgrace” and that more serious charges should have been pursued.

The Supreme Court, in February, unanimously overturned lower-court decisions that had acquitted six skinheads of promoting hatred against Roma (Gypsies) in a 1997 incident. The six would now face a new trial. Major Jewish organizations, which had intervened in the case in support of a reversal, expressed gratification.

Two prominent Jewish families in Windsor found swastikas painted on their property in August, in one case a home, in the other a store. This was the first time that individual families in Windsor had been targeted. At about the same time, swastikas and other racist graffiti were painted on a Hamilton school that had no Jewish connection. Swastikas were spray-painted on a synagogue in Belleville, Ontario, in October; a 17-year-old girl was charged with mischief to religious property and a trial was scheduled for January 2006. Anti-Semitic graffiti were daubed on an Edmonton synagogue in December, prompting Prime Minister Martin to declare, “this is not Canada . . . we will condemn it with every fiber of our being.” Local representatives of other religious communities demonstrated in front of the synagogue the next day in a display of solidarity.

The use of the Internet to spread messages of hate remained a serious problem. A federal court judge issued a temporary injunction in October to prevent Tomasz Winnicki of London, Ontario, “from communicating, by means of the Internet, messages that are likely to expose
persons to hatred or contempt” for reasons of religion, race, or national origin. The judge determined that blacks and Jews were clearly the targets of Winnicki's “vile” postings, which were “manifestly contrary” to the Canadian Human Rights Act. The case arose from a 2003 complaint by human-rights lawyer Richard Warman. The permanent disposition of the case was still before the Human Rights Tribunal as the year ended.

Another Internet case involved Reinhard Gustav Mueller of Edmonton, who was convicted by a jury in December of using the Internet to promote hatred of Jews, the first such conviction in Canada. Mueller’s Web site, Federation of Free Planets, depicted Jews as demonic and subhuman, denied the Holocaust, and blamed Jews for creating the Ebola and HIV viruses, the events of 9/11, and the destruction of the space shuttle Columbia. Attorney Warman praised the Edmonton hate-crimes unit for its excellent police work. In a third case, B’nai Brith complained to the University of Ottawa that one of its professors was posting anti-Semitic material on his Web site.

In Toronto, three students were expelled from Royal St. George’s College, a prep school, for posting anti-Semitic material in an Internet chat room. One of the three was Jewish. The repugnant material was brought to the attention of school authorities by four students at a nearby girls’ school who became aware of the content. Royal St. George’s officials acted quickly against the offending students.

The young man responsible for the 2004 firebombing at the United Talmud Torahs school in Montreal, Sleiman Elmerhebi, pleaded guilty to arson in December of that year (see AJYB 2005, pp. 299–300). In January 2005, he was sentenced to a 40-month prison term. Judge Jean Sirois, in announcing the sentence, declared that this was no mere act of vandalism, but rather one of terrorism “motivated by vengeance, hate, and prejudice against a cultural community.” New information about the firebombing emerged in July. In rejecting Elmerhebi’s request for day parole or early release from his sentence, the National Parole Board revealed that when he committed the arson he was under the influence of a “known activist” who was never apprehended, in part because Elmerhebi refused to divulge any information about him.

David Ahenakew, the aboriginal leader who became notorious for his anti-Semitic statements in 2002 (see AJYB 2003, p. 314), continued to be a focus of attention as his trial for promoting hatred of Jews approached. In a letter to the Winnipeg Free Press, Chief Terrance Nelson of the Roseau River First Nation warned that media coverage of the trial could intensify natives’ hatred of Jews and lead to possible violence against po-
lice. Although dissociating himself from Ahenakew's views, he opposed prosecution because by demonstrating Jewish “power” it reinforced the beliefs of some people in the correctness of those views. However, Phil Fontaine, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, publicly disagreed with Nelson.

At the trial in Saskatoon in July, Ahenakew was convicted of promoting hatred against Jews and fined $1,000. For his part, Ahenakew was defiant, blamed Jewish organizations and anti-native attitudes for his travails, and announced his intention to appeal. He said that the suffering and oppression of native Canadians was worse than what the Jews experienced at the hands of the Nazis. BBC responded with a statement that “Ahenakew has proved yet again that his hate crime conviction is fully justified.” Later that month, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson revoked his membership in the Order of Canada, only the second such action ever taken. She acted on the recommendation of the Order's advisory council, which reported to her that “his actions have brought disrepute to the Order.” Ahenakew had earlier blamed the CJC for orchestrating a campaign to strip him of the honor.

In the midst of the Ahenakew affair, both Jews and native Canadians made special efforts to improve their relationships. For example, Dennis White Bird, grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, joined Jewish leaders for a Passover lunch in Winnipeg to try to calm the waters. Neil Duboff, president of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, said that “we want to do all we can do together to make sure racism of all sorts” is opposed. During the summer, over 40 leaders of the League of First Nations and the Christian Caucus for Israel participated in a mission to Israel. Rev. Raymond McLean, pastor of an aboriginal church, found parallels between the Jewish and native experiences, asserting that “we can identify with the Jewish people as going through the same phase in history.”

Burhan Azzeh, president of the Niagara Palestinian Association, was arrested and charged in October for allegedly threatening the Jewish community publicly in comments made the previous month. Pending trial, he was ordered to stay away from the synagogue in St. Catharines and avoid any function or protest where Jews might be present.

Wolfgang Droege, the well-known founder of the racist and white supremacist Heritage Front, was shot and killed in April at his Toronto apartment. Keith John DeRoux was arrested and charged with second degree murder. Police said that the killing was unrelated to Droege's political activities.
After a year-long investigation of articles appearing in *The Miracle*, a Muslim newspaper published in British Columbia, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Hate Crimes Unit decided not to press charges. The articles blamed the Jews for, among other things, both world wars and the 9/11 terror attacks. The investigation concluded that this was not hate literature per se, and although the paper clearly intended to promote hatred, that intention was insufficient to prosecute.

The Canadian Islamic Congress apologized in June to the American writer Daniel Pipes for its description of him in one of its publications as “a follower of Hitler” who “wants to ethnically cleanse America of its Muslim presence.”

**Holocaust-Related Matters**

Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew addressed a special session of the UN General Assembly in New York to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. He raised the specter of renewed hatred in countries like Canada “that must be rejected if the world is to truly mean ‘never again.’” Prime Minister Martin’s statement on the anniversary emphasized Canada’s role in defeating Nazism. He also urged Canadians to vow “never to forget this dark chapter in history” and to be vigilant in the defense of “our common humanity in the future.” The province of Quebec and the city of Montreal also marked the day. Governor General Clarkson attended the ceremony at Auschwitz, accompanied by CJC president Ed Morgan and survivor leader Nate Leipciger.

At a Montreal symposium marking the occasion, Queen’s University historian Gerald Tulchinsky discussed Canada’s role with regard to Jewish refugees. Arguing that Canada did not have the ability to rescue Jews during World War II, he showed that even if it had been able, public opinion, the economic situation, and internal political tensions would have precluded such efforts. Hector Mackenzie, a historian in the Department of Foreign Affairs, noted that both elected and career government officials displayed chilling indifference to the plight of Europe’s Jews, reflecting the reality that some 80 percent of Canadians opposed the admission of Jewish refugees. Even after 1945, he added, there was still considerable resistance to Jewish immigration.

In June, Citizenship and Immigration Minister Joe Volpe asked the cabinet to revoke the citizenship of five suspected war criminals: Helmut Oberlander, Vladimir Katriuk, Jacob Fast, Michael Baumgartner, and
Wasyl Odynsky. The action seemed tardy, since the courts had, as much as six years earlier, found that all these men had obtained citizenship fraudulently by lying about their actions during the Holocaust. Baumgartner died shortly after Volpe’s request, and the other four cases remained before the cabinet. Attorney David Matas, speaking on behalf of the BBC in September, charged that “the government has a lineup of people who lost in federal court and they haven’t done anything after that to revoke their citizenship.” New citizenship revocation cases were launched against Jura Slomatczuk, alleged to have been a concentration camp guard, and Josef Furman, who allegedly took part in the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Canada, given a “B” rating by the Simon Wiesenthal Center for its pursuit of Nazi war criminals in 2003–04, was dropped to a “C” for 2004–05. (The U.S. was rated “A” for both periods.) Efraim Zuroff, director of the center’s Israel office, expressed shock at the slow progress on individual cases in Canada. “What’s going on here is unbelievable,” he said, stressing that only three cases had been initiated since 2003 and just 21 since 1994. He concluded that “it’s a total failure of political will to finish off these cases in the manner they should be.” Zuroff questioned whether the local Jewish community had pushed hard enough. While the number of investigations in other countries had risen, Zuroff complained that “Canada has basically given up. They seem to be going through the motions and it doesn’t seem to be getting anywhere . . . . There is an increasing feeling that the government is totally oblivious, apathetic on this issue.”

Neo-Nazi publicist Ernst Zundel faced deportation to Germany after a federal court judge ruled that he had not been deprived of any fundamental rights and had voluntarily abandoned his Canadian resident status when he left for the U.S. in 2000. Zundel was later deported by the U.S., returned to Canada, and asserted that he had a right to remain. Subsequently, the government designated him as a danger to national security (see AJYB 2005, p. 302). Since Zundel had never acquired citizenship during his decades-long sojourn in Canada and had relinquished his permanent-resident status by leaving, he could now be deported. In his February decision, Judge Pierre Blais noted the extent to which Zundel had associated publicly with white supremacist and anti-Semitic groups. The deportation to his native Germany took place in March, and there Zundel faced criminal charges for Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic activities. CJC president Ed Morgan praised the government, stating, “this is a significant day for the Jewish community and for all those who treasure tolerance in a multicultural society.”
A new exhibit, “Anne Frank: A Private Photo Album,” opened in March at the Holocaust Centre of Toronto. The exhibit consisted of 69 previously unseen photographs of Anne, her sister Margot, and mother Edith, taken by Otto Frank between 1927 and 1942.

“Visas for Life: The Righteous and Honourable Diplomats” was exhibited at Montreal’s Concordia University beginning in March. The exhibit told the story of over 100 diplomats who went out of their way to assist Jewish refugees. Among them was Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Serving as consul general in Bordeaux in 1940, he contravened orders by issuing transit visas to some 30,000 refugees, many of them Jewish. Among those who benefited was Montreal businessman Thomas Hecht, who publicly thanked the diplomat’s grandchildren at the opening ceremony. De Sousa Mendes, fired for his insubordination, was only rehabilitated after his death by the Portuguese parliament. Noted author Peter Newman, who spoke at another “Visas for Life” event, at the Université de Montréal, in June, was also saved, in part, by a visa issued by de Sousa Mendes.

Despite protests from the Jewish community, a Montreal auction house, legor-Hotel des Encans, sold six items illustrated or signed by Hitler—four architectural drawings and two personalized greeting cards—at a public auction in July for a total of $32,400. The executive director of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre and Museum commented: “We find it deplorable that these objects, originally belonging to one of the most reviled mass murderers in history, would financially benefit either the seller or the purchaser.”

Max Stern, a Montreal art dealer and collector who died in 1987, left the bulk of his estate to two Canadian universities and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His executors made restitution claims in order to recover paintings that were taken from Stern by the Nazis before and after he left his native Germany in 1937, claiming that some 250 artworks were either confiscated by the Nazis or sold by Stern under their pressure. So far six paintings had been tracked down, and negotiations were underway to recover them.

The claim was made that a painting at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts by Charles Le Brun had been confiscated by the Nazis from a Jewish art dealer in the Netherlands, Jacques Goudstikker. A relative, Marei von Saher, who lived in Connecticut, contended that the late Mrs. Goudstikker, the dealer’s widow, never renounced her claim to the painting, despite a settlement with the Dutch government in 1952. The museum, however, claimed that the painting was included in the renunciation. Negotiations were underway to resolve the dispute.
A poll conducted for the Association of Canadian Studies in January showed that 29 percent of Canadians thought that the main victims of the Nazis were non-Jews. Only 40 percent were aware that six million Jews had been murdered, and about 16 percent believed the number to be less than one million. Officials of the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre urged schools to place more emphasis on the history of World War II and the Holocaust. Holocaust education was not mandatory in Canada, but a new required course for Quebec high school students, beginning in September, covered both the Holocaust and the war.

The Azrieli Foundation and the Institute of Canadian Jewish Studies at Concordia University launched a new project to publish and distribute memoirs of Holocaust survivors. David Azrieli, himself a survivor, was anxious to gather as many memoirs as possible from aging survivors.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Demography**

Statistics Canada issued a report in March entitled *Population Projections of Visible Minority Groups*, including estimates for the next 12 years. Although Jews were not themselves considered a “visible” minority, there was a section on non-Christian religious denominations that did include them. By extrapolating from past trends, the report estimated that the number of Jews (by religion) would grow to about 375,000 (according to the medium projection) by 2017, compared to 340,800 in the 2001 census, while remaining 1.1 percent of the total population throughout the period. Montreal Jewry, however, was expected to drop from about 92,000 in 2001 to 85,000 or less by 2017. Manitoba was also expected to see its Jewish population decline, while provinces likely to witness growth were Ontario (from 197,000 to 223,000), British Columbia (from 21,800 to 27,600), and Alberta (from 11,200 to 17,900). Jews were projected to be the only non-Christian group that would not increase its share of the total population. The Muslim share, in particular, was expected to experience robust growth.

In this context, immigration was vital to the interests of the community. Jewish Immigrant Aid Services in Montreal reported in March that although the massive influx from France and Argentina that was expected by some in 2002 had not materialized, there had been a steady stream from those two countries, as well as from Israel, in recent years.
Immigration, indeed, played a vital role in Canadian Jewish life, according to a study by Charles Shahar for UIA Federations Canada. Without it, he found, the Jewish population in the country might actually have declined between 1991 and 2001 instead of rising by 3.5 percent during that decade, to reach just over 370,000 in 2001. Total Jewish immigration during that period was 32,340, mainly from the former Soviet Union, the largest Jewish influx from a single region since the early twentieth century. Other major sources of immigrants during the 1990s were Israel (4,480), the U.S. (3,000), South Africa (2,110), Western Europe (1,550), and South America (985). About 20,000 of the immigrants settled in the Toronto area, nearly 6,000 in Montreal, and 2,400 in Vancouver. During the decade there were approximately 15,000 deaths and only 21,000 births, not a good augury for the long-term vitality of the community. By 2001 there were 13,545 Jews born in Israel and 6,110 born in South Africa living in Canada—two-thirds of each group in the Toronto area—and about 7,300 Moroccan-born Jews living in Montreal.

Another UIA Federations Canada census analysis by Shahar covered language use. Russian had eclipsed French as the second most common mother tongue after English: some 26,500 Jews listed Russian while 22,125 listed French. English-mother-tongue Jews totaled 260,500, but it was the home language of 310,000, about 84 percent. Some 20,000 Jews reported Yiddish as their mother tongue, but only 7,000 used it as the main home language. There were over 13,000 who specified Hebrew as their mother tongue, and nearly 7,000 who used it as the main language at home.

A study for the Jewish Federation of Ottawa showed that approximately one-third of the city’s Jews lived in intermarried households and that 82 percent of married Jews under age 30 had a non-Jewish spouse.

Communal Affairs

North American Jewry gathered in Toronto in November for the General Assembly (GA) of the United Jewish Communities. Prime Minister Martin was among those who addressed the group (see above, p. 112). Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon sent a videotaped message urging increased aliyah from North America and other countries in the West.

How best to advocate Jewish causes continued to be a major concern of the country’s Jewish community. The Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA), established in 2004 (see AJYB 2005, p. 304), came under review toward the end of the year. CIJA, under the aegis of
UIA Federations Canada (UIAFC), oversaw the advocacy activities of the CIC, CJC, and the National Committee for Jewish Campus Life. CIJA’s CEO, Hershell Ezrin, outlined a number of accomplishments in its first 18 months in an interview with the Canadian Jewish News. Aside from preparing for the World Peace Forum, scheduled for 2006 in Vancouver, he pointed to behind-the-scenes actions that led to a more positive tone toward Israel and greater awareness of the dangers of anti-Semitism on the part of the government.

With so much emphasis on CIJA, BBC reiterated its advocacy program, carried out independently of CIJA and focusing on Israel, international human rights, and campus outreach. The organization called for vigorous and outspoken activism in behalf of Jewish causes.

At the end of the year, with a federal election approaching, a Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee was established to foster Jewish participation in the electoral process. Chairman Lawrence Zimmering viewed the new group as “a tremendous step forward for Canadian Jewish advocacy.”

Montreal’s central social service fund-raising agency, Centraide, terminated its annual allocation of about $1 million to Federation CJA, canceling a 30-year-old agreement on funding. Considering that the federation spent about $23 million for local needs, the loss of $1 million was consequential. The impetus for the reevaluation of Centraide’s policy was an article in Le Devoir in 2003 that questioned the propriety of Centraide giving money to such an affluent organization and affording “special privileges” to the Jewish community. The article led to pressure on Centraide from some of its key donors. Nevertheless, individual constituent agencies of the federation were able to apply to Centraide for grants. Four were successful, thereby offsetting most of the loss from the overall cut.

In August, Federation CJA announced its intention to establish a facility in the Montreal suburb of Dollard-des-Ormeaux to serve the approximately 17,000 Jews who lived in the West Island. Federation president Sylvain Abitbol viewed the initiative as a way of “reinforcing Jewish identity,” a matter of increasing urgency in suburban areas.

An investigation on behalf of Quebec’s health minister led to the resignation of Michel Amar as executive director of the Jewish Eldercare Centre (JEC). The investigator found serious management problems that affected the quality of services delivered to clients. The resultant report called for major changes in the center’s operations and recommended merging it with Mount Sinai and Maimonides hospitals. The institutions
reacted warily, fearing that their Jewish character could well be eroded through government-inspired reforms.

Toronto’s 2005 UJA campaign raised $58 million, up $3 million from 2004 and standing third among North American communities, behind only New York and Chicago. Despite a successful 2004 Montreal campaign, Federation CJA had a $2-million shortfall in its budget and had to reduce its staff. Part of the reason was the loss of an anticipated $10 million from the Quebec government for day schools, after officials, early in the year, backtracked on a promise previously made (see below, p. 307). After many years of operating under the Jewish Community Council (Va’ad Ha’ir), the Ottawa Jewish community decided to form a federation that incorporated the UJA fund-raising body, a structure similar to those in Toronto and Montreal.

The federal government, in September, recognized the 1919 founding of the Canadian Jewish Congress as a significant historical event in Canada. In announcing the designation, Parks Canada issued a statement: “In addition to giving Canadian Jews unity, national status and a voice on the national and international scenes, the CJC would prove to be a veritable forum for Judaism in Canada, as well as a major force in integrating the Jewish community and in recognizing and channeling the contributions of its members.” The agency said it would erect a plaque commemorating the founding in Montreal’s Monument National theater.

Israel-Related Activity

Prof. Martin Lockshin, director of Jewish studies at Toronto’s York University, wrote a column in April in the Canadian Jewish News expressing dismay at a publication that had been circulated in local congregations, mainly Orthodox. The anonymous author advocated “wiping out” alien nations living in the land of Israel, citing Deuteronomy chapter 7, and denied the legitimacy of any peace treaty with such peoples. Lockshin, himself an Orthodox rabbi, expressed his revulsion at such “hateful, racist ideas,” and stressed that Judaism requires that they be rejected. He concluded that “if our community has been infected with hatred of this nature, if our synagogues disseminate offensive literature, we have much to correct and much to teach.”

Montreal Jews demonstrating in August against the Gaza disengagement created a public contretemps. Rabbi Reuben Poupko, himself right-of-center politically, sharply criticized an antidisengagement rally held in a park across from his synagogue that prominently featured anti-Zionist
Hasidim from suburban Boisbriand and from Monsey, New York. Rabbi Poupko saw the rally, organized by Chabad rabbis, as an audacious challenge to Israel by people “who view the creation of the State of Israel as a crime against God and His Torah . . . .” Rabbi Asher Jacobson, however, one of the organizers, viewed the protest as a way of lending support “to the Jews of Gaza who are being demonized and smeared in many quarters.” He characterized the withdrawal as a violation of human rights and Jewish law. Meanwhile, Rabbi Poupko and two Orthodox colleagues held a concurrent event inside his synagogue that stressed prayer and reflection. That month five Orthodox rabbis from the Toronto area wrote an open letter to Prime Minister Sharon to protest alleged violations of the human rights of Gaza settlers during the course of the evacuation. The letter praised the residents of Gush Katif and referred to “the pain and anguish they feel at the betrayal of the government as they watch their life work delivered into the hands of their enemies.”

Montreal Jewry, through Federation CJA, took the lead with regard to the development of the Negev by hosting the Be’er Sheva Summit of 16 philanthropic bodies that sponsored social projects in the Israeli city. Deputy Premier Shimon Peres told the February meeting that Israel was seeking $1 billion in American government loan guarantees for the development of the Negev and the Galilee, calling those projects “the most important Zionist enterprise of the next few years.”

Canadian athletes won a total of 59 medals at the Maccabiah Games in August, held in Israel. These including nine gold, 17 silver, and 33 bronze. The Canadian medal count was the fourth highest among the 55 competing teams.

The CJC decided to revive its dormant committee on Jews from Arab lands in order to prepare for an international effort to highlight their pursuit of justice in 2006. Congress CEO Bernie Farber announced an educational program directed at MPs and the general public. Prime Minister Martin encouraged the effort in June by publicly acknowledging that some 850,000 Jewish refugees had legitimate claims.

Religion

In March, in the midst of an acrimonious seven-month strike, with no settlement in sight, Marvid Poultry, Montreal’s main supplier of kosher chickens, went out of business. However, about six months later, the outstanding issues were resolved and the company reopened. In the interim, the Va’ad Ha’ir, the main supervisor of kashrut in the city, departed
from its longstanding practice and allowed chickens to be brought into the city from outside, in this case Toronto and Iowa, thereby averting a crisis for the kosher consumer.

In the weeks leading up to the Passover holiday in April, a dispute broke out within Montreal’s Sephardi community over kashruth. In a dramatic move against what he considered to be the extravagant price of kosher meat, Rabbi Jacob Levy, a congregational rabbi who was also a qualified shochet (ritual slaughterer), decided to slaughter lambs so as to provide inexpensive meat for the holiday for his congregants and needy members of the larger community. But the Grand Rabbinat du Québec (GRQ) declared the meat unkosher because it lacked the required certification from the Va’ad Ha’ir. Chief Rabbi David Sabbah defended the actions of the GRQ on the grounds that existing authorities must be respected and unilateral actions could undermine the system. After several meetings during the spring—which Rabbi Levy called a waste of time—Levy expressed his “intention to continue his kashruth project,” providing less expensive meat to kosher consumers.

Modern Orthodox congregational rabbis in Montreal set up a new conversion committee to supplement the existing process under the aegis of the Va’ad Ha’ir. Underlying the move was the feeling that the Va’ad was dominated by ultra-Orthodox rabbis and that a more modern approach in the area of curriculum and delivery was needed, with maintenance of traditional religious standards. The initiative was approved by both the Va’ad and the bet din of the Rabbinical Council of America.

The Rabbinical Assembly of Canada established a school for training synagogue ritual directors, which began operations during the summer at Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto. The organizers recognized the increasing difficulty in attracting qualified professionals to fill such jobs.

Remarks at the December meeting of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism in Boston sparked a heated reaction in Toronto. At the meeting, Rabbi Menachem Creditor opined that his movement’s toleration of nonegalitarian synagogues was not only wrong but was in fact an example of “institutional misogyny.” Later that month the Ontario Region of the Rabbinical Assembly issued a statement that “a new orthodoxy has taken root in the Conservative movement, one that threatens its delicate cohesiveness. In legitimating egalitarianism, this new orthodoxy finds it necessary to delegitimate tradition.” This reaction reflected the reality that Conservative Judaism in the region was more resistant to some of the changes that had taken place in the movement than its counterparts across the rest of the continent. As a remedy to the rift, Rabbi
Steven Saltzman advocated a more sharply delineated Canadian substructure within the United Synagogue. Indicating just how resistant the movement in Ontario was to broader Conservative currents, 2005 saw only the first appointment of a female rabbi, when Beth Jacob Congregation in Hamilton appointed senior rabbinical student Julia Andelman to the post. She predicted that her movement would become fully egalitarian in the near future.

As he prepared for retirement in June, Rabbi Michael Stroh of Toronto expressed concern about the decreasing amount of cooperation between Orthodox and other rabbis. Reform himself, Stroh praised relations with Conservative colleagues but noted that Orthodox congregational rabbis did not join the Toronto Board of Rabbis, which he once headed. “I think it’s a pity,” he observed.

Rabbi Eva Goldfinger, head of Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Toronto for many years, was ordained in October by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. She thus became the first Canadian rabbi from that group.

The Jewish community in Regina came up with an innovative solution to the problem of burial of intermarried couples, an issue growing in importance as rising intermarriage rates clashed head-on with the traditional ban on burial of non-Jews in a Jewish cemetery. Regina’s solution was called The Cemeteries, separated from the main Jewish cemetery area by trees and shrubbery. The gravesites were arranged in such a way that a husband and wife could be buried next to each other, but the graves of the Jewish and non-Jewish spouses were separated by an 18-inch high barrier created by a steel link chain, and thus the non-Jewish spouse’s body was outside the Jewish cemetery. Judge Noel Sandomirsky, a lifelong member of Beth Jacob Synagogue, proposed the idea and brought it to fruition as chairman of its burial society.

Toronto’s Va’ad Harabonim (Orthodox rabbinical organization) established a Va’ad Hatzdokah (charity committee) to issue official certificates that identified legitimate charity collectors. Apparently there had been many cases of abuse in the past by people falsely claiming to be collectors.

Education

In December 2004, the Quebec government announced that it would increase funding for the secular studies provided in Jewish day schools from 60 to 100 percent of the public school level, a move that would have
brought as much as an additional $10 million per year to the schools. But very heavy media and public pressure were brought to bear against the change. Editorials in major newspapers referred to “a powerful Jewish lobby,” an expression that the BBC’s Quebec director, Bill Surkis, found reminiscent of classic anti-Semitic tracts. A minor suburban paper, for example, ran an editorial questioning funding to “a community that controls a good part of the Western economy and supports without reservation its political leader, the criminal Ariel Sharon, whose country legalizes torture and carries out genocide.” One public opinion poll showed some 90 percent of respondents opposed to the plan.

Premier Jean Charest's government caved in and backtracked on its much-ballyhooed initiative, even as Charest deplored the “demagogy and prejudice” that had emerged. Rabbi Reuben Poupko sharply criticized some of the commentary in French-language newspapers: “The imagery of rich Jews out to wield their power to the detriment of others is unconscionable. It shows that on the slightest pretext, all bounds of decent behavior are off.” Commentator Gil Troy, writing in The Gazette, pointed to the “innuendo and invective” that “demonized the Jewish community, revealing ugly pools of anti-Semitism festering provincewide.” However, Bram Freedman, operations director of Federation CJA, thought other factors were more important than anti-Semitism. Federation president Sylvain Abitbol said that he would look for ways to “build bridges with our fellow Quebeckers.”

Toronto Jewry’s perennial quest for day-school funding on the same basis as the Catholic schools made no progress during the year. The Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools decided to appoint an executive director to coordinate its lobbying activities. In September, Premier Dalton McGuinty was picketed by supporters of public funding for the Jewish schools when he attended a B’nai Brith dinner to present its Award of Merit. They accused him of hypocrisy for proclaiming that “there will be one law for all Ontarians” when he announced cancellation of government recognition of faith-based arbitration (see above, p. 285), while perpetuating discrimination against non-Catholic students denied funding for their religious schools. In November, Jews joined Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians in a rally at Queen’s Park (the provincial government center in Toronto) to demand an equitable funding policy.

A new curriculum for Hebrew and Judaic studies known as Tal AM was introduced at several Montreal Jewish day schools in the fall. The program, developed by a Montreal-based team headed by Tova Shimon, had been adopted by many schools throughout North and South Amer-
ica, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Israel, had been widely praised, and was supported by the Avi Chai Foundation.

Philanthropists Zeev and Sara Vered donated $1 million to the University of Ottawa to establish the Vered Jewish Canadian Studies Program, which would focus on the history, culture, and literature of Canadian Jews. The university's president, Gilles Patry, said it would be the first program to emphasize Jews in Canada, "how they contributed to Canadian society and the various difficulties they had."

Quebec’s Education Ministry announced that, beginning in 2008, it would require high school students to take a course on major religions from a cultural perspective. Jewish day schools, because they received public funding, would also have to offer the course.

Community and Intergroup Relations

In a surprise ruling, the Quebec Court of Appeal overturned a 2003 decision that required a man to pay damages to his former wife because he unreasonably withheld a get (religious divorce) from her. The three-judge panel determined that the civil courts lacked the power to enforce a religious contract such as the one signed by Jessel Marcovitz, in which he agreed to appear before a Montreal bet din for the purpose of granting a get immediately after obtaining a civil divorce. The result was that the woman was unable to remarry for 15 years, until Marcovitz finally agreed to a religious divorce. The ex-wife’s attorney, Allan Stein, said “this puts us back another 20 years. It’s a terrible blow to Jewish women.” The decision raised grave doubt about the ability of Jewish women in such situations to seek remedies in the civil courts.

In the Laurentian Mountains village of Val Morin a clash began in 2002 between town officials and a community of Belzer Hasidim who spent summers there over the legality of their use of one house as a synagogue and another as a school. After three years, the case went to court, the village contending that zoning laws prohibited a house of prayer in a residential zone and the Belzers responding that they had been praying there for 20 years and that enforcement of the law would violate their religious freedom. The CJC, as an intervenor in the case, supported the Belzers, its lawyer, Adam Atlas, declaring that “the state has no business in the prayer rooms of the nation.” Judge Benoit Emery of Quebec Superior Court ruled in September in favor of the town, and ordered the closure of the synagogue and school. He found that the community owned another piece of land nearby that could legally have been used for both. Moreover, he concluded that the Belzers had “deceived” the village
for many years regarding its intentions for the two houses. In August, vandals had attacked a Belzer summer camp in Val Morin and defaced religious texts.

After Pope John Paul II died in April, a community-wide commemoration of his life was held under the auspices of the CJC at a Montreal synagogue. Rabbi Reuben Poupko praised the late pope, observing that “what he did will reverberate for years to come. The Jewish people have lost a friend. It was a privilege to live in his time.” Rabbi Ronnie Cahana added that “the world has lost a champion for the soul of humanity . . . and is dimmed because we do not hear that voice anymore.” The revenue minister of Quebec, Lawrence Bergman, praised the pope as “a shining example of peace in his rejection of racism, intolerance and anti-Semitism that has inspired people everywhere.”

After Pope Benedict XVI was elected, the chair of CJC’s national executive, Victor Goldbloom, expressed the hope that his German background “has given him a special sensitivity to the tragic history of the Jewish people . . . “ In a further demonstration of improving Catholic-Jewish relations, Jean-Claude Cardinal Turcotte of Montreal attended Yom Kippur services at Temple Emanu-El Beth Sholom and addressed the congregation in the afternoon. He spoke on the impact of the Vatican’s declaration Nostra Aetate, issued 40 years earlier, on Christian-Jewish relations. Turcotte said “the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God,” saying that the Church “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.”

Culture

Jason Sherman’s play After the Orchard had its premiere in September at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Based on Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard, Sherman’s new effort told the story of a Jewish family in Ontario’s cottage country. Two plays by the acclaimed Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai were produced in Toronto in May: To Love in Jerusalem and The Day Martin Buber Was Buried. They marked the opening of director Adam Seelig’s theater company, One Little Goat. Territories by Niki Landau, which opened in Toronto in November, dealt with issues arising from a suicide bombing in Israel. The Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre of Montreal’s Saidye Bronfman Centre mounted a new production of the musical version of Lies My Father Told Me in June. Eyal Bitton’s King David: The Musical premiered in Toronto in March.

“ReJewvenation: The Futures of Jewish Culture” was the title of a con-
ference held at the University of Toronto in October. It consisted of both academic and theatrical presentations.

Toronto’s Jewish Film Festival in May—the world’s largest such event—screened 101 films, many dealing either with the Holocaust or contemporary Israel. One entry, by Canada’s National Film Board, was Shylock. A highlight of the Montreal Jewish Film Festival, also held in May, was Moshe Safdie: The Power of Architecture. Safdie, who lived in Montreal for many years, attended, along with director Donald Winkler. Among the films exhibited at the Toronto International Film Festival in September was Lian Lunson’s Leonard Cohen I’m Your Man, along with several other films of Jewish interest. The Israeli Film Festival, held in Ottawa in June, showcased six top films, including Turn Left at the End of the World and Nina’s Tragedies. Several new Israeli documentaries were featured at the Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto in April.

Documentaries that were screened for the first time during the year included Michael Ostroff’s Pegi Nichol—Something Dancing About Her, Harry Rasky’s Modigliani: Body and Soul, and Noemi Weis’s award-winning Gloriously Free. Alexandre Trudeau’s film The Fence, about an Israeli and a Palestinian family on opposite sides of the security barrier, generated substantial criticism from the audience at Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple in November for its alleged lack of objectivity.

A number of documentaries were made for television. The most ambitious was Simcha Jacobovici’s 26-part series, The Naked Archaeologist, an attempt to use archaeology to affirm the historicity of the Bible, which, in Jacobovici’s view, was just the opposite of what contemporary biblical archaeologists usually did. Susan Poizner made a 13-part series entitled Mother Tongue: A Woman’s History of Ethnic Canada. Eric Scott’s The Other Zionists focused on the way that Israel employed checkpoints to increase security, how that affected Palestinians, and the activities of the Israeli group Machsom Watch that monitored checkpoint activity. Mike Sheerin made The Biographer’s Voice: The Life & Times of Peter C. Newman for CBC television, a thorough examination of one of Canada’s most distinguished authors. Fern Levitt made Gorbachev’s Revolution for the History Channel. Sex Slaves, about the international sex trade, was made for the CBC by Ric Esther Bienstock. A high-profile defense lawyer was the subject of A Criminal Mind: The Life and Times of Eddie Greenspan on CBC. Bravo TV ran a documentary on a noted film producer, Harry Gulkin: Red Dawn on Main Street.

Université du Québec à Montréal hosted the first showing outside Is-
An exhibition of Robert Burley’s photographs of Toronto synagogues was on display at the Eric Arthur Gallery of the University of Toronto in the spring. “Instruments of Faith—Toronto’s First Synagogues” featured those that were built early in the twentieth century and reflected the architectural styles prevalent in the European areas from which the various congregants came.

Ian Leventhal produced the exhibit “Journey of Hope” that told the story of European Jews who made it to Shanghai to escape from the Nazis. In Montreal in November, John Schweitzer presented the exhibit “Benjamin’s Alphabet,” a series of collages relating to the life and work of philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin.

The planned Canadian Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg, backed by the family of the late media owner Israel Asper, came under criticism from Canadians for a Genocide Museum, a coalition of some 40 groups, including Greeks, Ukrainians, and Arabs. The coalition preferred a museum that would commemorate all genocides rather than focusing on the Holocaust. The secretary of the coalition, a former head of the Canadian Arab Federation, urged that the museum be independent of the Asper family.

Winnipeg’s Dos Yiddish Vinkel (The Yiddish Corner) opened in September. A Yiddish library and resource center, it was a key element of the Kaufman-Silverberg Library at the Asper Jewish Community Campus, and retained part of the collection of the former Jewish Public Library. The issues of two defunct Montreal newspapers were being digitized there: Kanader Adler, a renowned Yiddish paper founded in 1907, and the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, launched in 1914. Having the papers available in this form was expected to facilitate historical research. Also in Montreal, the late Dora Wasserman, the central figure in the city’s Yiddish theater for years, left a considerable volume of papers, photographs, films, and posters from her lengthy and memorable career. The material, being collected, archived, and preserved by volunteers, was also expected to be digitized and made available to the public.

The Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec (United Sephardi Community of Quebec) held a cultural festival in Montreal in Novem-
The programs included the music, history, and traditions of North Africa, speakers on a joint Jewish-Arab mission to Auschwitz, an art exhibit, and a documentary film.

Publications

The Canadian Jewish Studies Reader, edited by Richard Menkis and Norman Ravvin, covered a wide range of disciplines in order to highlight the growth of the field in recent years. The eclectic collection of essays ranged in topics from Birobidzhan to a secular Yom Kippur ball to recent communal controversies to anti-Semitism. Generally absent from consideration were the Jewish community's major institutions.

William Weintraub's novel Crazy About Lili told the story of a Jewish teenager coming of age in Montreal in the middle of the twentieth century and his friendship with a famous exotic dancer. Sheila Fischman translated Naim Kattan's memoir of his childhood, Farewell Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad. Kattan was a teenager during the critical years when life for the Baghdadi Jews, which had been relatively peaceful, turned into a nightmare.

Isabel Vincent's Bodies and Souls examined a Jewish network of the international sex trade, known as Zwi Migdal, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It brought young Jewish women from Eastern Europe to work as prostitutes in the Americas, especially South America. Vincent's social history followed the lives of three such women.

Stewart Bell's The Martyr's Oath treated the life of a Canadian jihadi who joined Al Qaeda and was assigned to carry out terrorist attacks on U.S. and Israeli interests overseas. Bell concluded that "he was just one solitary product of a global network that manufactures terrorists." Even more importantly, Bell learned that there were up to 100 such committed potential terrorists in Canada ready to act.

Other books on Canada and Canadian Jewry included the autobiography of retired Quebec appeals court judge Fred Kaufman, Search for Justice; Contemporary Anti-Semitism: Canada and the World, edited by Derek Penslar, Michael Marrus, and Janice Gross Stein; George Jonas's memoir, Beethoven's Mask; Chacmei Yisrael of Toronto—Toronto's Sages by Rabbi Mayer Abramowitz; Saul Cantor's memoir From Then to Now: Growing up Jewish in Toronto's Little Italy; and Dreams Have No Expiry Date: A Practical and Inspirational Way for Women to Take Charge of Their Futures by Deanna Rosenswig and Laurie Gottlieb. There were several Holocaust memoirs: Blatant Injustice: The Story of a Jewish
Refugee from Nazi Germany Imprisoned in Britain and Canada during World War II by Walter W. Igersheimer and edited by Ian Darragh; Joseph Tenenbaum’s Legacy and Redemption: A Life Renewed; Too Small to Matter by Edith Sommerfeld; Simcha Simchovitch’s translation of his aunt Gitel Hopfeld’s At the Mercy of Strangers: Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland; and Michael Kater’s Hitler Youth. Among books of Judaica were Sefer Dat Yehudit by Rabbi Leib Baron; The Secret Code of Jewish Years by Rabbi Mordechai Bulua; and David Harduff’s Transliterated Hebrew-English Dictionary.

Joseph Cohen’s Les Juifs de Fès celebrated the history of a major Moroccan community. Other nonfiction works were Aftershock by David Matas; Avi Friedman’s Room for Thought: Rethinking Home and Community Design; artist Erol Russo’s autobiography Ailleurs; Alexander Brott and Betty Nygaard’s Alexander Brott: My Lives in Music; Chicken Soup with Chopsticks: A Jew’s Struggle for Truth in an Interfaith Relationship by Jack Botwinik; Allan Levine’s wide-ranging cultural and social history, The Devil in Babylon; Origin of Life: The Fifth Option by Bryant Shiller; The Beatles in India by Paul Saltzman; and Mourning Has Broken—A Collection of Creative Writing About Grief and Healing, edited by Mara Koven and Liz Pearl.

Works of fiction included Chava Rosenfarb’s monumental Holocaust novel, From the Depths I Call You, 1940–1942: Book Two in The Tree of Life, A Trilogy of Life in the Lodz Ghetto, translated by the author and Goldie Morgentaler. Other fictional works included Glen Rotchin’s novel about the Montreal garment industry, The Rent Collector; Stepchild on the Vistula by Simcha Simchovitch; Catherine Gilidner’s Seduction; Memory Book by Howard Engel; Feed My Dear Dogs by Emma Richler; The Secret Mitzvah of Lucio Burke by Steven Hayward; Nellcott Is My Darling by Golda Fried; Remember Remember: A Victorian Mystery by Sheldon Goldfarb; The City Man by Howard Akler; Anna Morgan’s Daughters of the Ark; and Turned Away by Carol Matas. Somer Vineberg published a collection of his poems, Stylish Writes. Simcha Simchovitch’s newest book of Yiddish poetry was Dos Likht Fun Khesed (Light of Mercy). Ricochet was a collection of sonnets by Seymour Mayne.

Personalia

Hugh Segal and Yoine Goldstein were appointed to the Senate of Canada. David Barrett and William Schabas were named officers of the Order of Canada, while Gerald Freed and Abraham Gold became mem-
bers. Mark Wainberg and George Karpati were named to the Ordre national du Québec. In November’s Quebec municipal elections three Jewish mayors were elected: Karin Marks in Westmount, Anthony Housefather in Côte Saint-Luc, and William Steinberg in Hampstead. Newly appointed university presidents were Jack Lightstone at Brock University, Sheldon Levy at Ryerson University, and Sylvia Bashevkin at University College of the University of Toronto. Prof. Nahum Sonenberg, a McGill University biochemist, was one of five winners of the Killam Prize, the country’s most prestigious academic award. Ted Saskin was elected president of the National Hockey League Players Association.

Former cabinet minister Robert Kaplan was made a chevalier of the Legion of Honor by France. Keith Landy, former CJC president, won the Lincoln Alexander Award of the Law Society of Upper Canada for his human rights work. Charles Harnick and Linda Rothstein received Law Society Medals. The Royal Society of Canada conferred the Sir John William Dawson Medal on Prof. Jean-Charles Chebat. Rabbi Elyse Goldstein won a Covenant Award from the United Jewish Communities for her educational work. David Shore won an Emmy Award.

Winners of the Canadian Jewish Book Awards were David Bezmozgis, Warren Bass, Goldie Morgentaler, Isa Milman, Martin Lockshin, Anne Dublin, Jill Culiner, Elaine Kalman Naves, James Laxer, and Lisa Appignanesi. Mystery writer Howard Engel won the Matt Cohen Award for lifetime achievement from the Writers’ Trust of Canada. The Canadian Jewish News won two awards: a Rockower Award for excellence in editorial writing from the American Jewish Press Association, and a Quebec Community Newspapers Association Award as the best overall specialty newspaper in 2004.

The Canadian Jewish Congress made several promotions and appointments: Bernie Farber to CEO, Manuel Prutschi to executive vice president, Len Rudner to national director of community relations, Steve Shulman to Ontario regional director, and Joachim Normand to Quebec regional director. David Engel and David Koschitzky were elected chair and vice chair, respectively, of the board of UJA Federation in Toronto. Bram Freedman was promoted to chief operating officer of Federation CJA in Montreal. Gerry Weinstein was elected president of B’nai Brith Canada, Sharon Hart president of the Jewish National Fund, and Bernard Pinsky president of the Vancouver Jewish Federation. The Jewish Federation of Manitoba appointed Marsha Cowan as CEO, and Hadassah-WIZO selected Freda Ginsberg as executive vice president. The Canadian Shaare Zedek Hospital Foundation elected Jeff Rosenthal
president and appointed Jerry Tollinsky as executive director. Sheva Zucker became executive director of the League for Yiddish in the U.S., Rabbi Bernard Baskin was elected president of the National Association of Retired Reform Rabbis, a continental body, and Jay Brodbar was appointed executive director of New Israel Fund Canada.

Members of the community who passed away during the year included Lou Zablow, in January, aged 80, a leader of Holocaust survivors; Joseph Schreter, in January, aged 99, businessman; Yiddish educator Leo Rubinov, in February, aged 89; survivor and Holocaust educator Ibolya Grossman, in February, aged 88; artist Gerald Gladstone, in March, aged 76; Yedidia “Eddy” Kaplansky, in March, aged 79, one of Israel’s first air force pilots; industrialist and former CJC president Milton Harris, in March, aged 77; Rabbi Shimshon Heilik, in March, aged 87, educator, artist, and writer; businessman, philanthropist, and hockey club owner Edward Bronfman, in April, aged 77; musician and conductor Alexander Brott, in April, aged 90; sculptor Paul Lancz, in April, aged 85; federation audiovisual specialist Henry Beigel, in April, aged 53; civic and community leader Marjorie Baskin, in April, aged 77; Solomon Gisser, a renowned cantor, in April, aged 87; Alan B. Gold, in May, aged 87, former chief justice of the Quebec Superior Court and noted labor mediator; businessman and community leader Paul Pearlman, in May, aged 79; business executive and community leader Arthur Konviser, in June, aged 59; journalist, editor, and author Gerald Clark, in July, aged 88; noted educator and longtime executive director of Toronto’s Board of Jewish Education, Rabbi Irwin Witty, in August, aged 73; citizenship court judge Sigmund Reiser, in August, aged 81; spiritual leader and teacher Rabbi Joshua Shmidman, in August, aged 71; community leader Richard Gabbay, in August, aged 49; composer Harry Freedman, in September, aged 83; Jake Superstein, in September, aged 90, businessman and philanthropist; award-winning artist Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, in November, aged 82; internationally known obstetrician Dr. Morrie Gelfand, in November, aged 81; family physician Dr. Phil Yanover, in November, aged 73; longtime hospital pastoral-services director Rabbi Myer Schecter, in December, aged 76; physician and mohel Dr. Elie Cass, in December, aged 82; labor lawyer and community leader Avrum Orenstein, in December, aged 59.

Harold M. Waller