

Historically important day for relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Canada

Mr. Brian Masse, Member of the Canadian Parliament and sponsor of the Srebrenica (remembrance) Genocide Day, which was adopted last year in the Canadian Parliament informed the Congress of North American Bosniaks, Canadian Branch that a Friends of Bosnia and Herzegovina Group has been formed in the Canadian Parliament.

The Friends of Bosnia and Herzegovina Group in the Canadian Parliament consists of:

Chair: Mr. Dave Mackenzie, MP,

Vice Chair: Mr. Brian Masse, MP,

Vice Chair: Mr. Bernard Trottier, MP,

Executive Member (Treasurer): Mrs. Nina Grewal, MP,

Executive Member: Senator Raynell Andreychuk.

Group currently has 26 members

Special credit for the formation of the Group in the Canadian Parliament goes to **H.E. Biljana Gutić-Bjelica, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Canada, Mrs. Nina Grewal, MP and Mrs. Dženita Hozo.**

It is also important to emphasize that the formation of the Friends of Bosnia and Herzegovina Group was assisted by the Bosnian Community in Canada led by Congress of North American Bosniaks and Institute for Research Genocide, Canada.

The special assembly on Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Canadian Parliament will provide support to the Canadian Parliament with the necessary political and economic reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to improve cooperation between the two states. With this new establishment there is an aim to also improve cooperation between the two parliaments, and the present the values of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Canadian society.

After the recognition of the Bosnian language in Canada, the ability to use the ethnic name Bosniaks in the Canadian political and statistical documents, the adoption of the Srebrenica Genocide resolution in the Canadian Parliament, the establishment of a parliamentary procedure regarding the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the formation of the Friends of Bosnia and Herzegovina Group in the Canadian parliament demonstrates a successful start, but the process of lobbying for the interests of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Canadian cultural mosaic must continue.

Prof. Emir Ramic

President of the Congress of North American Bosniaks, Canadian Branch

Press Release as written by staff in Nina Grewal's office

Parliamentary Friendship Group Canada – Bosnia and Herzegovina held its first constitutive meeting in Ottawa on November 15, 2011. In total, 26 members of the Canadian Parliament from all parties represented in Parliament have expressed interest and willingness to be members of this group.

The meeting also elected and appointed Group Executive Committee. As proposed by the Member of Parliament of Canada, Nina Grewal, the chairman of the Group was elected Dave Mackenzie, two Deputy Chairman (Brian Masse and Bernard Trottier), and two executive members (Nina Grewal and Raynell Andreychuk).

At the request of the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina H.E. Biljana Gutić-Bjelica precedent was made, so that the representative of the Embassy will be allowed to attend meetings of the Group in order to directly contribute, as stated in the [address](#) by the Ambassador.

Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in her address emphasized the great contribution of Canada to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past 19 years, both in building and maintaining peace, in planning its restoration, improvement of democracy and respect for human rights. Of particular importance were remarkable contributions of Canada in financing activities for removal of land mines in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Meeting was followed by a reception hosted by the Embassy of BiH and it was conducted in a very cordial and positive atmosphere. Participants rated the event as very important, perhaps in the historical context of bilateral relations between the two countries, this initiative and call for cooperation was very much needed due to the negative effects produced by closing of the Canadian Embassy in Bosnia in July of 2009. It is hoped that the Group will contribute to better communication of the two Parliaments, thus enhancing and enlivening bilateral relations.

Given that the enthusiasm of the members of the Group is at a high level, internal lobbying activities have been announced in order to increase the number of members to the quota of 50. This would enable the Group to acquire the right to apply for the status of "association" (Parliamentary Association). It would represent an increase in influence and funding which would be provided by the Parliament of Canada, because the current funding comes from members of the Group and it amounts to 10 Canadian dollars per year per member.

Press Release as written by staff in Nina Grewal's office

Canadian Parliamentarians Form Parliamentary Friendship Group with Bosnia and Herzegovina

Group with Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ottawa – On November 15, 2011, Canadian Parliamentarians met to launch the first Canada-Bosnia and Herzegovina Friendship Group. An initiative of Member of Parliament Nina Grewal (Fleetwood-Port Kells), and with the support of Bosnia and Herzegovina Ambassador to Canada, H.E. Biljana Gutic-Bjelica, the group will offer Canadian Members of Parliament and Senators an opportunity to build closer ties with their counterparts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“A Friendship group will give Parliamentarians here and in Bosnia and Herzegovina a venue to work together, to learn from one another, and to build a relationship between our two countries,” said MP Grewal. “Since Bosnia and Herzegovina’s emergence as a state in 1992, the Government of Canada has played a significant role in its development in terms of peace keeping, security, reconstruction, institutional reform, the promotion of good governance, and the rule of law as well as the strengthening of state-level institutions. I believe we can build further on this support, to aid Bosnia and Herzegovina as it matures and prospers, and a Canada-Bosnia and Herzegovina Friendship Group can have an integral role to play to that end.”

Ambassador Biljana Gutic-Bjelica also addressed the assembled Parliamentarians: “The establishment of the Group will certainly mark a new phase in the bilateral relations between the two countries. The Embassy truly hopes that this Group will become a new forum for exchange of information, experience and knowledge, and at the same time a generator of closer cooperation between the Canadian Parliament and Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Ottawa. I am more than happy that this day has come and deeply thankful to all of you present today and to all who, although not here today, supported this initiative and my dream.”

The organizational Annual General Meeting, chaired by the Group’s Coordinator, Dzenita Hozo-Freeman, elected the following executive officers to a two year term:

Chair: MP Dave MacKenzie

Vice Chair: MP Brian Masse

Vice Chair: MP Bernard Trottier

Executive Member: MP Nina Grewal

Executive Member: Senator Raynell Andreychuk

Members also considered a draft of the Group’s constitution before adjourning until a second meeting expected to be scheduled for early in the New Year.

Interparliamentary groups, also referred to as “Parliamentary Friendship Groups” often play an important role in supporting ongoing parliamentary relations with the identified country or in providing an opportunity for parliamentarians interested in a specific international cause to

engage with colleagues with a similar interest.

The Letter of Appreciation

To: Members of the Canada-Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Friendship Group

The Letter of Appreciation

On behalf of the Congress of North American Bosniaks, Canadian Branch, which represents the Bosniak-Canadian Community, I want to express my sincere appreciation for your Membership in the first Canada-Bosnia and Herzegovina Friendship Group.

The Canada-Bosnia and Herzegovina Friendship Group will be a powerful force for the good of Canada and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will help to direct attention to the needs of Bosnian – Canadians, to foster and improve relations between Canada and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to present the values of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Canadian society.

We appreciate your fight for better Bosnian – Canadian Friendship.

Sincerely yours,

Professor Emir Ramic

President of the Congress of North American Bosniaks, Canada Branch

Letter of the CNAB to the members of the Bosnian Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Bosnian Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group

To the members of the Canadian Parliament and the Parliamentary Friendship Group

I would like to thank you for this important step in joining the first friendship group aimed at supporting the interests of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Canadian parliament. We hope that you will reach your goal of increasing the number of members from 26 to 50 very shortly, and offer our support.

As one of the first countries to recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada has always offered its support to Bosnia and its people on their path to civil democracy. Our hope is that the members of the Parliamentary Friendship Group will advocate for Bosnian interests in order to protect the rights of Bosnian-Canadians as well as help protect civil rights of Bosnians in their home country at this crucial moment when the pressure from the West is much needed to steer the country's political elite in the right direction: direction of a progressive, civil, democratic society that guarantees same rights to all its members.

Again, I thank you for showing support to Bosnia and Herzegovina in such an important way, and I wish you great success in your newly established Parliamentary Friendship Group. Let this letter of support serve you as a clear sign that the Congress of North American Bosniaks and its Canadian and United States chapters stand beside you in this effort to strengthen democratic changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sincerely,

Haris Alibašić

President of the Congress of North American Bosniaks (CNAB)