



Canadian Institute for Jewish Research  
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## ISRANET DAILY BRIEFING

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**HARPER ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECEIVED BY ISRAELI KNESSET — TELLS MK'S:  
“THROUGH FIRE & WATER, CANADA WILL STAND WITH YOU”**

### SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

*Frederick Krantz, Jan. 20, 2014*

It is exceedingly rare that politicians speak clear and unadorned truth, especially today when elected officials rely on slick p.r. advisors and "professional" diplomats in their foreign ministries to crank out "balanced", and "even-handed", *i.e.*, self-serving and often-cowardly policy-statements. Hence Stephen Harper's speech before the Israeli Knesset, and the world, today is truly remarkable: a politician speaking truth out of principle to the nation that invented "speaking truth to power", and to the world which so often subordinates speech to power. When an elected official does this, despite the quickly expressed negative criticisms and condemnations not only of many in Israel's sad and vicious region, but also in the United Nations, among some Western nations, and even in the political opposition in his own country, he is not a politician, but a statesman, even a prophet.

The Canadian Prime Minister clearly noted the real issues confronting the Jewish state: unending antagonism on the part of both Arab dictatorships and West European democracies, the vile record of antisemitism leading to the Holocaust (and his own country's "none is too many" policy for Jewish refugees) and resurfacing today as "anti-Zionism", absurd "apartheid" analogies and calls for "BDS", Palestinian opposition to real peace and ongoing terrorism, the terrible moral and political hypocrisy of the UN, and the US-led coalition's dangerous appeasement of Iran on the key nuclear issue which--once again--threatens the Jewish state's very existence.

Politicians come and go, as do political parties and governments. Indeed, Stephen Harper's Conservatives may well be defeated in the next, increasingly-impending Canadian election. But when, disregarding politics, he says that embattled democratic Israel is a "great example to the world", that the Jewish state's story, despite suffering and horror, has been to "move beyond resentment and build a most extraordinary society"...one that so values life that, "overcoming the collective memory of death and persecution [it] will sometimes release a thousand criminals and terrorists to save one of [its] own"--he speaks not for the moment, but for the ages.

Stephen Harper's historic Jerusalem appearance, and his prophetic words there, will long endure: "Justice, Justice, thou shalt pursue", says the Biblical prophet, and we here in Canada should be proud that our Prime Minister's courageous words and deeds embody this call, and that they are now, as the ancient Greek historian said, a possession for all time.

*(Prof. Frederick Krantz, Director of the Canadian Institute  
for Jewish Research, is editor of the Isranet Briefings)*

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[Harper Tells Israel: ‘Through Fire and Water, Canada Will Stand With You’](#): *Times of Israel*, Jan. 20, 2014— Shalom. And thank you for inviting me to visit this remarkable country, and especially for this opportunity to address the Knesset. It is truly a great honour.

[Toronto Lawyer Vivian Bercovici is Canada’s Next Ambassador to Israel as Harper Government ‘Affirms Unfailing Support’ for Jewish State](#): Stewart Bell, *National Post*, Jan. 8, 2014— Canada’s new ambassador to Tel Aviv is a lawyer and outspoken commentator on Middle East issues who has criticized Palestinian leaders for their “intransigence” and “ideological commitment” to Israel’s destruction.

[A Fresh Perspective: Harper and Israel](#): Dan Illouz, *Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 19, 2014 — With the recent announcement of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s visit to Israel in January, I find it appropriate to take a closer look at one of the most interesting political actors in the world with respect to his relations with Israel.

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## **HARPER TELLS ISRAEL: ‘THROUGH FIRE AND WATER, CANADA WILL STAND WITH YOU’**

*The full text of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s address to the Knesset (January 20, 2014).  
[Times of Israel](#), Jan. 20, 2014*

Shalom. And thank you for inviting me to visit this remarkable country, and especially for this opportunity to address the Knesset. It is truly a great honour. And if I may, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my wife Lauren and the entire Canadian delegation, let me begin by thanking the Government and people of Israel for the warmth of your hospitality. You have made us feel extremely welcome. We have felt immediately at home. Ladies and Gentlemen, Canada and Israel are the greatest of friends, and the most natural of allies. And, with your indulgence, I would like to offer a reflection upon what makes the relationship between Canada and Israel special and important. Because the relationship between us is very strong...

The friendship between us is rooted in history, nourished by shared values, and it is intentionally reinforced at the highest levels of commerce and government as an outward expression of strongly held inner convictions. There has, for example, been a free trade agreement in place between Canada and Israel for many years, an agreement that has already proved its worth. The elimination of tariffs on industrial products, and some foodstuffs, has led to a doubling in the value of trade between our countries. But this only scratches the surface of the economic potential of this relationship. And I look forward to soon deepening and broadening our mutual trade and investment goals. As well, our military establishments share information and technology. This has also been to our mutual benefit. For example, during Canada’s mission to Afghanistan, our use of Israeli-built reconnaissance equipment saved the lives of Canadian soldiers. All such connections are important, and build strong bridges between us...

However, to truly understand the special relationship between Israel and Canada, one must look beyond trade and institutions to the personal ties of friendship and kinship. Jews have been present in Canada for more than 250 years. In generation after generation, by hard work and perseverance, Jewish immigrants, often starting with nothing, have prospered greatly. Today, there are nearly 350,000 Canadians who share with you their heritage and their faith. They are proud Canadians. But having met literally thousands of members of this community, I can tell you this: They are also immensely proud of what the people of Israel have accomplished here, of your courage in war, of your generosity in peace, and of the bloom that the

desert has yielded, under your stewardship. Laureen and I share that pride, the pride and the understanding that what has been achieved here has occurred in the shadow of the horrors of the Holocaust...

The understanding that it is right to support Israel because, after generations of persecution, the Jewish people deserve their own homeland and deserve to live safely and peacefully in that homeland. Now let me repeat that: Canada supports Israel because it is right to do so. This is a very Canadian trait, to do something for no reason other than it is right, even when no immediate reward for, or threat to, ourselves is evident. On many occasions, Canadians have even gone so far as to bleed and die to defend the freedom of others in far-off lands. To be clear, we have also periodically made terrible mistakes as in the refusal of our government in the 1930s to ease the plight of Jewish refugees. But, as a country, at the turning points of history, Canada has consistently chosen, often to our great cost, to stand with others who oppose injustice, and to confront the dark forces of the world...

It is, thus, a Canadian tradition to stand for what is principled and just, regardless of whether it is convenient or popular. Israel is the only country in the Middle East Which has long anchored itself in the ideals of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. But, I would argue, support today for the Jewish State of Israel is more than a moral imperative. It is also of strategic importance, also a matter of our own long-term interests. Ladies and gentlemen, I said a moment ago that the special friendship between Canada and Israel is rooted in shared values...

Indeed, Israel is the only country in the Middle East Which has long anchored itself in the ideals of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. These are not mere notions. They are the things that, over time and against all odds, have proven to be the only ground in which human rights, political stability, and economic prosperity, may flourish. These values are not proprietary; they do not belong to one nation or one people. Nor are they a finite resource; on the contrary, the wider they are spread, the stronger they grow.

*[To Read the Full Transcript of Prime Minister Harper's Speech to the Knesset Follow This [Link](#) –ed.]*

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## **TORONTO LAWYER VIVIAN BERCOVICI IS CANADA'S NEXT AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL AS HARPER GOVERNMENT 'AFFIRMS UNFAILING SUPPORT' FOR JEWISH STATE**

*Stewart Bell*

[National Post](#), Jan. 8, 2014

Canada's new ambassador to Tel Aviv is a lawyer and outspoken commentator on Middle East issues who has criticized Palestinian leaders for their "intransigence" and "ideological commitment" to Israel's destruction. Vivian Bercovici, who was appointed to the diplomatic post Wednesday by Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, has been voicing her views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the opinion pages of the *Toronto Star* for the past year.

In her columns, Ms. Bercovici has decried the Palestinian Authority and Hamas for "their collective ideological commitment to the total destruction of the state of Israel, which they regard as a blasphemous blight on the Arab and Muslim worlds." A year ago, she wrote about the "misguided fantasy" that Israel was the main obstacle to peace when there "is no willing negotiator on the Palestinian side." She took on the boycott Israel movement next, saying that to invoke apartheid in the debate was a "Big Fat Lie." She also criticized the "farce" of the United Nations allowing such gross human rights abusers as Iran and Egypt to rebuke Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile, was a "respected" leader who "has enhanced national security, immeasurably."

While it is unusual for a senior diplomat to be so frank in public, Ms. Bercovici is not a career foreign service officer. Rather, she is a Toronto lawyer who was once a policy advisor to an Ontario finance minister and served on the CBC board of directors. “I have had the opportunity to spend substantial time with Ambassador Bercovici and am most impressed with her knowledge and understanding of the region as well as the challenges confronting the Jewish state,” said Shimon Fogel, CEO of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

But Paul Dewar, the NDP foreign affairs critic, questioned whether she was the best choice for the sensitive posting. He said Canada needed experienced and insightful analysis from its diplomats in the region. “I suspect that’s not what we’re going to get with this appointment,” he said. He said the position was previously held by trained, veteran diplomats. “And remember, this isn’t just a person who’s going to be working ... with the government of Israel. They need to also be working with the Palestinian Authority and working with other countries in the region.”

The appointment comes as Prime Minister Stephen Harper is preparing for his first state visit to Israel this month. Under the Conservatives, Canada has developed closer ties with Israel, defying the protests of pro-Palestinian activists. The selection of Ms. Bercovici suggests the government remains committed to strengthening that relationship. “The Harper government will continue to affirm our government’s unfailing support for Israel’s right to exist in peace and security, as well as the close and long-standing relationship that exists between both countries,” a Conservative source said.

A mother of two, Ms. Bercovici studied at York University, Hebrew University, the London School of Economics and the University of Toronto. She has been a lawyer for 24 years, and was until recently a partner at Dickinson Wright LLP and an adjunct law professor at the U of T. “Having lived in Israel and written extensively on the region, Ms. Bercovici has an excellent understanding of the challenges facing the country and deep insight into the opportunities provided by the strong links between our two countries,” Mr. Baird said.

With Syria in crisis, Lebanon on the brink of civil war, Egypt under military rule and Iran under pressure over its nuclear aspirations, her appointment comes at a challenging time. The U.S., meanwhile, has been trying to restart the stalled peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. In September, Ms. Bercovici wrote about walking through a Jerusalem mall that had been the target of a foiled Palestinian terror plot, “privately barraged with horrible images, images of unthinkable carnage averted.” Her column seemed pessimistic. “Israelis are intransigent; Palestinians are intransigent; Israelis will never relinquish settlements; Palestinians will never accept a Jewish state; and on and on it goes.” But she allowed that Israel and the West Bank were still “the most stable enclave in the perennially unstable region” and that over time both sides might come to “an imperfect coexistence.”

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**A FRESH PERSPECTIVE: HARPER AND ISRAEL**

*Dan Illouz*

[Jerusalem Post](#), Dec. 19, 2014

Ever since taking office in 2006, Harper has probably been the most supportive world leader to Israel. Starting in the Second Lebanon War, shortly after being elected, Harper changed the tone of Canada’s foreign policy from one of neutrality and even criticism towards Israel to a completely pro-Israel policy. In that war, Harper put all the blame for the violence on Hezbollah, and strongly defended Israel’s right to defend itself.

While support for Israel is a bipartisan issue in Canada, for years the Jewish community there was frustrated by its voting record at the UN. Since Harper took office things have changed dramatically, with Canada being willing to take bold steps – and pay the price for its support for Israel. Canada was the first to boycott the Durban Review Conference in 2008, for fear it would become another anti-Israel conference. In 2010, Canada lost a bid to become a part of the UN Security Council. According to Harper, this loss is directly linked to Canada's strong support for Israel. Canada's foreign minister met with Tzipi Livni in her east Jerusalem office, being the first country to have an official diplomatic meeting with an Israeli government official in that part of the capital.

In 2012, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas tried to get UN General Assembly to grant the Palestinians recognition as a de facto state. Canada was one of only nine states to vote against the resolution. What is striking is that after the vote, leaked memos showed that Canada intended to cut its \$300 million in aid to the Palestinians, while Israel argued against such a cut, claiming the support was important. In other words, Harper's Canada was acting in a more pro-Israel way than Israel! The question immediately comes up: Why does Harper support Israel in such a bold way? After all, electorally, it does not make much sense: According to a 2013 *BBC World Service* Poll, 25 percent of Canadians view Israel's influence positively, with 57% expressing a negative view.

Also, Canada does not have a large number of evangelical Christians for whom support of Israel is a critical issue, like there is in the US. When supporting Israel, politicians are appealing only to Canada's 350,000 Jews. In contrast, the Arab-Canadian population is 470,000. While, as we will see, in some heavily Jewish ridings Israel can be a pivotal issue to winning the district, it is unclear if this support helps more than it would hurt in other key ridings.

For Harper and his Conservative Party, it seems that supporting Israel is a moral issue. "I would characterize the position as one of moral clarity," said Canadian Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver on a recent trip to Israel. "If there's a conflict between a democratic ally and terrorist groups that want to destroy it, we don't see grays. The moral relativism that is sometimes a big factor is not what guides us. We think it's important for countries to walk the walk as well as talking the talk. When the victim is portrayed as the perpetrator and the perpetrator as the victim, this is not something we want to be associated with." Harper himself, at the recent Jewish National Fund dinner in which he announced his trip to Israel, explained: "In the world of diplomacy, we know how easy it is to drift away from Israel. We understand that the future of our country and of our shared civilization depends on the survival and thriving of that free and democratic homeland of the Jewish people in the Middle East."

This is not the discourse of a party making political calculations, but rather of a party taking a moral stand. Having said that, Harper's support for Israel did have a strong influence on the voting pattern of the Jewish community of Canada. Traditionally, the community voted for the Liberal Party. However, various ridings which are heavily Jewish and were Liberal strongholds turned to the Conservative Party: Peter Kay in Thornhill, Joe Oliver in Eglinton-Lawrence, Mark Adler in York Center – all won in previous Liberal strongholds with a strong Jewish presence. One of the most interesting battles happened in the Mount Royal riding in Montreal, from where this writer originates. There, the Liberal candidate is one of the most popular Israel supporters in the world, Irwin Cotler. For those who do not know him, he is often considered a Canadian version of Alan Dershowitz; as former justice minister, Cotler is one of the most popular politicians in Canada. Mount Royal and Thornhill in Ontario are the only two districts in Canada where Judaism is the most commonly practiced religion. This district has been Liberal ever since 1940.

In 1999, in his first time running, Cotler received 91% of the vote. In the previous elections, in 2011, Cotler received only 41% of the vote, with his main opponent, Saulie Zajdel of Harper's Conservative Party receiving 36%. For Zionist Jews in the riding, however, the question was neither Cotler vs Zajdel nor Liberals vs Conservatives. Rather, the question was whether to vote for Cotler in the riding or Harper as

prime minister. Those voting for Zajdel really voted for Harper, many expressing frustration at the fact that Cotler was in the wrong political party. Those who voted for the Liberals really voted for Cotler, praising his own personal record and saying that if anyone else was running, they would have voted Conservative. At the end of the day, Harper managed to give an incredibly strong fight against Cotler. Many analysts actually claim that he won the Jewish vote, but lost in other sectors where Cotler is still more popular.

While, as stated earlier, the Jewish community's electoral weight is nowhere near as strong or significant in Canada as it is in the US, Canada's Jewish community has shown gratitude to Harper for his moral clarity and strong pro-Israel stand. Within the Jewish community, there is growing criticism of the fact that many Jews vote in Canadian elections based on the candidate's support for Israel. As such, certain Jews criticize the shift in support from Liberals to Conservatives.

To respond to this criticism, I want to bring two levels of arguments. First of all, on a completely pragmatic level, voting according to foreign policy is not an illegitimate strategy. When voting, the electorate looks at parties and candidates as a whole. Yet what defines who they will vote for will also depend on the differences between the parties. If the parties are quite similar on internal issues, it makes sense to vote according to their foreign policy. In Canada, both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party can be defined as centrist: the Liberals being on the Center-Left and the Conservatives on the Center-Right. It makes complete sense for Zionist Jews who do not feel there is a really significant difference between these two parties on internal policy that will really affect their daily lives to look at foreign policy. However, on a deeper level, I think that for Jews, Israel must always be the No. 1 issue, even when parties have vastly different platforms on internal policy. The Jewish nation is a national entity. Although we might be spread out around the world, we kept our national entity.

Canadian Jews, just like American Jews, French Jews and all other Jews in the Diaspora, should of course aim to get what is best for both Canada and Israel. Both are important parts of their identity. However, if one must choose either Canada or Israel, Israel is our eternal homeland, and Canada is simply a nation that has graciously accommodated us during our exile. This might not be a popular position among Jews who are worried about being accused of dual loyalty – but, in my opinion, it is the correct position for a Jew to have. To me, as a person who is conservative politically while being strongly Zionist, this question has not arisen. When voting for Harper before making aliya, I was supporting both his internal policy and his foreign policy. However, while it might sound good to criticize people who vote according to the Israel issue, I believe that this voting pattern only shows that they got their priorities right. Jewish law teaches us that when giving charity, we must first take care of the needs of our own and only after, take care of the needs of others. A Jew who did not forget that he is in exile knows that his own are in Israel. For such a Jew, the most important issue in any election campaign will be Israel.

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## **ON TOPIC**

**[Stephen Harper's Deceased Father a Key Influence in PM's Support for Israel:](#)** [Mark Kennedy, Canada.com, Jan. 15, 2014](#) — Prime Minister Stephen Harper has warned that a dangerous new form of anti-Semitism has emerged and the globe has a moral and strategic objective to rally around Israel as a haven for Jews.

**[Canada and the Middle East: a Reality Check:](#)** [Globe & Mail, Derek Burney & Fen Osler Hampson, Jan. 9, 2014](#) — It is time to set the record straight on Canada's policies toward the Middle East as we anticipate Prime Minister Stephen Harper's official visit to Israel.

**[Prime Minister Harper and Canada's Official Policy on Israel: Are They Compatible?:](#)** [Alan Baker, Jerusalem Post, Jan. 13, 2014](#) — The upcoming visit to Israel by Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper heralds a significant step in the ongoing strengthening relationship between Canada and Israel.

**[Stephen Harper's Moral Leadership:](#)** [David M. Weinberg, Jerusalem Post, Jan. 16, 2014](#) — It hard to comprehend the depth and consistency of Canada's strong support for Israel in recent years without appreciating the deep moral underpinnings of Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper's worldview.