



For immediate release

Prime Minister Martin - Make this the last appointed governor general

Toronto, August 4, 2005 – Canada's republican movement, the non-partisan **Citizens for a Canadian Republic**, welcomes Michaëlle Jean as the new governor general. However, it's continuing its appeal for more democracy in the selection process.

"It's quite ironic," says Tom Freda, the group's national director. "Around the world, from Haiti to the Ukraine, Canada has heavily promoted democracy. Yet here at home, the acting head of state, as well as members of Parliament's upper house and justices of the Supreme Court are all personally chosen by a prime minister who himself is selected by party, not popular vote. In comparison, these traits make us one of the least democratic nations in the developed world."

"Furthermore," Freda adds, "despite the governor general's supposed apolitical status, the current selection process is actually very much politicized. In order for the position to maintain, at the very least, the impression of impartiality, the prime minister's influence must be removed from the formula."

Expanding on this is author and policy analyst Randall White, PhD.

"The current fractious Parliament in Ottawa has raised the prospect that a governor general might actually have to exercise the practical powers of the office over the fall and winter of 2005–2006. In effect, Mme. Jean may have to decide whether Paul Martin or Stephen Harper gets the nod in a parliamentary crisis or stalemate. How can a new governor general named by Paul Martin alone credibly do this job in the eyes of the opposition or even the public?"

A recent all-party parliamentary committee seems to agree that things need to change. "The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates" released a report in April 2004 titled, "The Governor General of Canada: Role, Duties and Funding for Activities." In addition to suggesting that parliament review "the process for selecting and appointing the governor general," it also recommended conducting a review and initiating a debate on "the mandate, constitutional role, responsibilities, and future evolution of the Office of Governor General."

"We have 5 years before another governor general is to be chosen," Freda points out. "That's plenty of time to put together a commission similar to the Flag Committee of 1964 to follow through on these recommendations. Prime Minister Martin has an excellent opportunity here to further address the 'democratic deficit' on which he campaigned successfully. Initiating this process will prove he means business."

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ABOUT CITIZENS FOR A CANADIAN REPUBLIC

Citizens for a Canadian Republic is a registered non-partisan, not-for-profit organization advocating the Canadianization of the head of state. It sees reforming the Governor General's office as a transitional stage, eventually leading to a position rendered completely independent of the British monarchy. Similar to the goals of the republican movements of Australia and New Zealand, this transition would make Canada a parliamentary republic, such as Ireland or fellow Commonwealth member, India.

More information is available at CCR's website.

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MORE INFORMATION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates SECOND REPORT: The Governor General of Canada: Role, Duties and Funding for Activities
http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfocomDoc/Documents/37/3/parlbus/commbus/house/reports/OGGO_Rpt02-e.htm