



Press release

For immediate Release

Mr. Guy J. Pratte withdraws as counsel to the Arar Inquiry

Ottawa, April 2, 2004 – Mr. Justice Dennis R. O'Connor, Commissioner to the Inquiry into the Actions of Canadian Officials in Relation to Maher Arar announced today the withdrawal of Mr. Guy J. Pratte as counsel to the Commission.

In a letter addressed to the Commissioner, Mr. Pratte writes: "I have become aware in recent weeks that Mr. Arar's lawyers objected to my continuing on as Commission counsel on the ground of an appearance of conflict or perceived bias because I have been involved in a completely unrelated legal matter on behalf of the Federal Government. Although I do not agree that there is any basis in law or in fact for this concern, I do believe that the public interest is better served by my withdrawing as Commission counsel so that my continued involvement not become a basis for questioning the integrity of the process you have undertaken."

It is with regret that Mr. Justice O'Connor accepted Mr. Guy Pratte's withdrawal from the Commission. However, the Commissioner agreed with Mr. Pratte that the integrity of the Inquiry's process is paramount and that there should not be any appearance of conflict or of perceived bias associated with the Commission.

Established under Part I of the Inquiries Act, the Arar Inquiry was set up on the recommendation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to investigate and report on the actions of Canadian officials in relation to Maher Arar. The Commission is also mandated to recommend an arm's length review mechanism for the activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with respect to national security.

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