



## Press release

For immediate release

### **The Arar Commission has completed 127 days of testimony and made public thousands of formerly secret government documents relating to the Arar affair**

**Ottawa, September 14, 2005** – The Commission of Inquiry into the actions of Canadian Officials in relation to Maher Arar, which is headed by Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor, concluded the bulk of its public hearings and submissions. In the course of a process that lasted more than a year, Commissioner O'Connor has heard 85 witnesses both *in camera* and in public during 127 days of hearings for a total of 30,450 pages of testimony.

During that time, the Commission made public 2,461 documents, some of which are thousands of pages long, – at least as many were produced for the *in camera* proceedings - from various government departments and agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) as well as the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Privy Council Office (PCO). These documents together with *viva voce* evidence constitute the basis of the factual evidence on which Commissioner O'Connor will base the findings of his report.

“The Commission has worked very hard to find a way to make documents and evidence public despite National Security Confidentiality (NSC) constraints”, said Commission Lead Counsel Paul Cavalluzzo. “Finding a workable mechanism to bring as much information as possible to all Canadians proved to be a tall challenge. However, the Commission's work in that regard will no doubt prove useful in other areas where the clash of NSC claims and individual human rights is at issue, such as in the security certificate cases.”

Commissioner O'Connor is expecting shortly to receive the report from the special Fact Finder Prof. Stephen Toope. Mr. Toope has been appointed to look into Mr. Arar's treatment during his detention in Jordan and Syria and the effect of that detention on him and his family. The Fact Finder has also investigated the situations of other dual national Canadian citizens who allege that they were tortured in Syria and detained in the same detention centres as was Mr. Arar.

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### **Policy Review**

Concurrently with the Factual Inquiry, The Commission, with the expertise of its Advisory Panel, carried out a series of public forum with Canadian and international experts, published a series of documents ([www.ararcommission.ca/PolicyReview/Documents](http://www.ararcommission.ca/PolicyReview/Documents)) and will be holding public hearings in mid-October to gather information on the other aspect of its mandate: the Policy Review. In that respect, Commissioner O'Connor is expected to make a series of recommendations to the government on an arm's length review mechanism for the activities of the RCMP with respect to national security. That report, which will be separate from the Fact Finding Report of the Inquiry, is expected to be tabled at the same time, in the first part of next year.

### **Report**

As he indicated in his "Ruling on Process and Procedural Issues" of May 9, 2005 ([www.ararcommission.ca/rulings](http://www.ararcommission.ca/rulings)) Commissioner O'Connor will table a report to the government. In fact, he hopes to submit two reports (Fact Finding and Policy Review) to the government by the end of the government's fiscal year, March 31, 2006. The Commission expects the government will release the public findings of the reports at that time.

*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 Commissioner is also mandated to make recommendations that he considers advisable on an arm's length review mechanism for the activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with respect to national security.*