

A Message from the Israeli Consul General



Mosaic in Israel Museum, courtesy of the author

by Geoffrey Clarfield

This January I received a newsletter from the Israeli Consul General in this large North American city. What did it tell me?

It introduced the new Consul General and some of her new staff. It showed her commemorating National Holocaust Day with the Mayor. It showed her at the Raoul Wallenberg monument in North York with the Hungarian Consul General.

It noted that the Ontario Minister for Colleges and Education is touring Israeli educational institutes and that we can follow her trip digitally, if we want. We also learn that the Deputy Consul General is in Israel looking at technology that can help fight climate change.

And finally, the newsletter shows us the pictures and names of a group of people who will meet in Toronto in February to explore potential Canadian and Israeli business partnerships.

The graphics of the communique have the feel of a last-minute Facebook posting, "Look, I am here doing this. Look, my colleagues are there doing that." The ratio of pics and information is about seven to one, female to male, so there is no need to worry about "gender balance." Finally, I know from speaking to Israeli colleagues that not all consulates send out newsletters and so, I am grateful for the fact that ours does, and that I am still on the list.

What disturbed me most about the newsletter was this. A Consulate is not a social club, nor should its newsletter be construed as a way of helping the Consul or her staff rise in the foreign affairs bureaucracy of the State of Israel, showing just how busy they are. A Consulate is supposed to look out for its national interest in that country and for the residents who hold passports of that country in the host country. It is also supposed to champion the country's interests and profile in the host country. This is standard operating procedure for diplomats.

So let me briefly point out just a few key points of what was missing, sorely missing, from this document in the hope that they just might change it.

1) Israel has just had an election. Bibi Netanyahu is Prime Minister once again. There was no mention of this and no mention of the policies that the Consul is now charged with representing, for employees of the diplomatic corps of any country when stationed overseas, are supposed to be non-partisan, and staff are supposed to enthusiastically represent and advocate for the new policies of their elected employers. Part of this is the dissemination of Israel's land rights going back to the Mandate for Palestine in the early 1920s. Israeli diplomats in Canada rarely mention this.

2) Anti-Semitism in Canada is exploding. Part of this is expressed as a political, cultural, and institutional boycott by colleges and universities in various ways against the State of Israel. Israel Apartheid Week and BDS were born at the University of Toronto. It is an active and growing movement. Did the Consul brief the Ontario Minister for Colleges and Education, and take the opportunity to point out the near institutionalized anti-Zionism that now permeates institutes of higher learning in the province, before she left for a visit to Israel?

3) There are thousands of Israelis who are both temporary and permanent residents of our city and province. We learn nothing about them and hear nothing from them. They are not inarticulate, and no doubt have much to say in their various fields of expertise. It can be professional and need not be "political" but could be, sometimes.

4) The National Government of Canada is mired in an ongoing scandal where they hire consultants who are so called experts in anti-racism and instead preach government funded anti-Zionism.

5) There are many successful, prominent Canadians who have made aliya and whom we would like to hear from and know about. Allow me to mention Matti Friedman (journalist) and Karl Skorecki (Dean of Medicine at the school in Tsefat) both "boys" from the Lawrence and Bathurst in Toronto.

6) There is no mention that the role of Israeli diplomatic institutions is unique in the world. Not only are they supposed to watch out for the interests of the State of Israel and its citizens abroad but, they are supposed to watch out for and look out for the Jews in the land of their posting. This policy goes back to the First Prime Minister David Ben Gurion.

7) The Iranian regime is doing everything it can to 'capture'

political elites in this country including elected officials. They must be publicly opposed. There are Canadian Iranian activists who are pro-Israel and willing to join forces. They are just waiting for the invite.

8) The mainstream CBC media, nationally funded, regularly demonizes Israel. Only a few media outlets defend the state and they are persecuted by the present government. At least the Consulate should include a link to Honest Reporting in its communications which opposes the almost daily lies and misrepresentation of Israel at the CBC, which gets its money from Canadian taxpayers.

9) Israel has rich troves of Biblical artifacts and vast expertise on the Bible. New artifacts are constantly being dug up that demonstrate the connection between the Jewish people and its ancestral Biblical homeland. Where are the travelling exhibits and museum exchanges?

10) Finally, Israel represents, symbolically, one half of the Judeo Christian ethic which is under assault by the left in Canada and the United States. One of its pillars is the cultural boycott of Israel and which is organically connected to the rise of "wokeness" which is horribly anti-Zionist and permeates Canadian media and schools.

These are some of the most important points that a Consulate must continuously and creatively address in communications with stakeholders, Jewish, Israeli as well as with Canadians of different backgrounds. Right now, these issues are "missing in action" in this newsletter. And so, in addition to the amateur tone and style of the Newsletter, there is little of substance being reported. Israel is a powerhouse of cultural and scientific creativity and you would not know it from this newsletter.

Let us give the the new Consul General the benefit of the doubt. She has inherited this format from her predecessor.

She is the “new kid on the block” and needs time to get settled. Perhaps she is already rethinking the format. Perhaps she will see this article and ask me to advise her on a new format that fulfills the diplomatic needs of her post, one that amplifies the input of the Jewish and Israeli communities of Ontario.

Either way, I will happily volunteer to help, as will so many of my colleagues, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Israel has more friends in Canada than most people suspect.

If you ask them, they will help.