

## UPF Montreal Canada: Interfaith Leaders Share Views on Social Harmony

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**Montreal, Canada** – In support of **UN World Interfaith Harmony Week**, the Montreal chapter of UPF-Canada hosted a meeting at its local headquarters on February 1, 2025, to explore ways that religious leaders can promote social harmony and a confluence of values among various sectors of society. Religious leaders of different faiths, community leaders, scholars, and one political representative joined several UPF members at a luncheon meeting to discuss “The Role of Religious Leaders in Building a World of Peace.”



Mistress of Ceremonies **Ms. Chantale Viau** opened the program by introducing the president of UPF-Canada, **Dr. Franco Famularo**, who gave an overview of the UPF principles and efforts to promote religious harmony throughout the decades since its founding.

Ms. Viau then introduced the keynote speaker, **Mr. Eric Le Reste**, recently retired, who spoke about his spirituality in the context of his dual career as a highly successful Radio Canada (CBC) host of social commentary programs and as a yoga master and coordinator of the Brahma Kumaris Centres in Canada. His message, often punctuated with humor, was that spirituality, which requires one to be a living example of belief through self-discipline rather than merely believing, begets wisdom – the ability to navigate life well.

Two respondents followed, giving commentaries to the theme based on their faith perspectives:



**Dr. Denitsa Tsvetkova**, coordinator of the Canadian Center for Ecumenism, spoke of interior peace as the precondition for outward peace, the need for courage in interfaith dialogue, and her concern that political instrumentalization of religions and religious people may lead to the denial of religious expression in a secularized society. She urged religious leaders to pay attention to their religious neighbors and make lasting relationships with them.



**Mr. Boufeldja Benabdallah**, co-founder and spokesperson for the Quebec City Mosque, extolled the five principles of UPF, saying they should be adopted by leaders of all faith communities because of their universal character. He concurred with the path to wisdom expressed by Mr. Le Reste, and reiterated the need for courage to follow the path iterated in the Islamic axiom that people of different communities were created as such so as to get to know each other, learn from each other, and live in peace.

In attendance for the entire session was **Mr. André Morin**, member of the National Assembly for the district in which UPF headquarters is located. He gave some very encouraging words from the perspective of his role as shadow minister for justice in the Quebec government.

**Ms. Isabelle Laurin**, coordinator of UPF-Quebec, led a lively Q & A session, which was followed by an equally lively lunch prepared by members of UPF-Montreal. Many participants lingered to extend the period of exchanges and networking.