

UPF Canada: Local Leaders & Citizens Celebrate Peace at Montreal Peace Road

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Montreal, Canada – A sunny Saturday morning was the backdrop for the 8th annual Peace Road Montreal event, honoring the UPF founders’ 1981 initiative to build an international highway of peace across the globe from Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to Santiago, Chile. A visionary project of this magnitude must start somewhere, and it has to gradually garner support of the world’s population to the degree that governments agree to cooperate by building their portions of the road within their jurisdictions.

With all that in mind, the Peace Road project has been undertaken in many countries over the past decade or so. In Canada, specifically in Montreal, Peace Road has become an occasion for political and civic leaders to join with average citizens to celebrate a moment of peace outside the usual cut and thrust of everyday life.



This year, on September 12, 2026, over 100 participants turned out in beautiful weather, including religious, political and civic leaders as well as regular folks. Seven organizations chose to officially partner with UPF, including the Lion’s Club of Canada and Montreal, the Focolare Movement, the Canadian Center for Ecumenism, le Conseil des leaders religieux de Montreal-Nord, the Centre Bon Courage, the Maison des Jeunes and the Regroupement Jeunesses et Action.

Activities began in the morning, when all gathered to launch the event at Park Beaudet in the St. Laurent Borough of Montreal, where there is a monument in honor of the International Day of Peace. The date for the Peace Road event is always chosen as close as possible to the United Nations-designated International Day of Peace on September 21.

Mr. Aref Salam, vice chair of the City of Montreal Executive Committee and long-time Ambassador for Peace of UPF, along with **Mr. André Morin**, member of the National Assembly for neighboring Acadie, led the political lineup with words of encouragement, while the borough mayor, **Mr. Alan DeSousa**, called to excuse himself this year for family reasons. Supporters from the Lions Club were present, and Bahá’í representative **Ms. Gigi Vidal** also spoke, as head of the neighborhood roundtable for the Saint-Laurent borough in Montreal. **Mr. Berj Merdjanian**, owner of Photo Cristal and long-time Saint-Laurent community leader, was again among the dignitaries as in prior years. ABC Center Director General **Ms. Henriette Konté** was also acknowledged for her presence.

Among the cyclists and participants were several dozen youth who were eager to enjoy some good

exercise in fine weather. The coordinator for the event was **Mr. Wanil Parfait**, a young UPF leader who represents a growing UPF orientation toward youth leadership in our region. All participants could benefit from interacting with political and civic officials who have lent unreserved support for this activity.



The event took place over two locations, as the cyclists started in one borough and cycled 15 kilometers (10 miles) to the Borough of Montreal North across town. There, at Park Eusèbe-Menard, UPF members and friends gathered with partners from sponsoring organizations under a permanent gazebo, with tents and chairs set up by the borough, awaiting the arrival of the cyclists who had taken the scenic route along the St. Lawrence River.

After their arrival at 11:30 a.m. a full program began, including encouraging remarks by political and civic leaders from the area and a multicultural program expressing the various communities' commitment to peace.



Speeches were given by:

Mr. Abdelhaq Sari, member of the Canadian Parliament for Bourassa Riding and a longtime friend of UPF;

Mr. Tony Nahas, Lions Clubs International's area leader for Canada, who recalled the friendship agreement between the Lions and UPF, as well as the launch of the Eternal Flame of Peace by Lions Clubs International, during which UPF inducted the international president of Lions Clubs International, Mr. Mark S. Lyon, as a Peace Ambassador;

Ms. Sara Nadeau, governor of Lions District U1, Canada, who expressed her support for UPF's efforts for peace, and the Lions' determination to promote this vision.

Artistic presentations were offered by professional and local singers, dancers and poetry readers:

A dance performance "Path to Calm," presented by Femmes Internationales Murs Brisés Canada (FIMB) in collaboration with The Blue Swan Guild Canada;

A song and interactive game by representatives of the Focolari Movement, originally a Roman Catholic lay movement, now operating ecumenically in 180 countries, with Eastern Canada co-director Pascal Bédros;



An original song by **Ms. Christa Maria Abou Akl**, Lebanese-Canadian singer-songwriter, pianist and performer;

A song by Mégane, and the message of **Ms. Sheilla Fortuné**, executive director of L'Ouverture Youth Center;

A group sing-along led by **Ms. Suzy Tremblay** with tambourine, into Indigenous culture;

A poem by **Mr. Orlando Ceide**, youth coordinator at the Bon Courage Community Center.



Overall it was an extraordinary event, blessed by good weather, a high-quality program, and enthusiastic participants representing a cross-section of the general population. UPF-Canada is grateful to the Borough of Montréal-Nord, which provided the tables, chairs, tents, and access to electricity at Park Eusèbe-Menard; to local sponsors VertCité, Ermis Fruit Shop, and Tim Hortons for the coffee and donuts; and to partners, volunteers and Peace Road coordinators – Mr. Wanil Parfait, **Ms. Isabelle Laurin**, **Mr. Robert Duffy**, **Mr. Pierre Beauregard** and **Dr. Franco Famularo**.