

October 3, 2010

Letters to the Editor  
Ottawa Citizen  
1101 Baxter Road  
Ottawa ON  
K2C3M4

We are appalled by the actions of Defence Minister Peter MacKay in cancelling the public talk at the National Defence Headquarters to mark Islamic History Month by Imam Ziyad Delic, the executive director of the Canadian Islamic Congress. That this was done precipitously and with no direct communication to Imam Delic is inexcusable. Not only is it rude in the extreme, it smacks of knee-jerk intolerance and ignorance of what this man stands for.

As members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa, we know first hand that Imam Delic has been at the forefront of reaching out and building constructive relationships between Muslims and other groups in our society. He abhors violence, has stated this clearly, and has been tireless and passionate about finding ways of creating understanding and acceptance on all sides. That he could be held accountable 6 years later for reprehensible remarks by a former president of the Canadian Islamic Congress not only negates all the positive work that he has done in the meanwhile but also begs the question – can he and his Congress never move beyond this? And whose fault is it, if we won't let him?

We have heard Imam Delic speak about the exemplary way the Canadian integration model works. He is a proud Canadian. As a spokesperson for Muslims he is articulate about the values we cherish in our open, democratic society. He comes from war-torn Bosnia; he knows what racial/ethnic/religious intolerance creates. He has dedicated his life to promoting understanding in our multicultural society. We need to applaud this man who steps forward to build bridges. Peter MacKay and others who have vilified Imam Delic need to ask more questions before making public decisions that encourage division and intolerance in our society.

Elinor and Mark Mueller and a total of 18 members of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ottawa