

**Mohammed caricatures: the Government of Québec calls for
non-violence and dialog**

MONTREAL, Feb. 9 /CNW Telbec/ -In recent weeks, the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in many European newspapers has outraged Muslim communities around the world and in some cases sparked violence. The Government of Québec and Muslims in Canada denounce this violence, while acts of vandalism at two Laval-area mosques underscore the importance of strengthening a pacifist and serene dialog.

Immigration and cultural communities minister Lise Thériault understands the disappointment and suffering that Muslims have experienced following the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed. The Muslim community is active and vital to Québec's growth. Furthermore, it is a peaceful community, as it has demonstrated on a number of occasions by promoting non-violence.

"Since our election, we have built strong ties with the Muslim community, as with all cultural communities in Québec. This reflects our mutual desire to better understand each other and share our values," expressed Mrs. Thériault.

These events make us aware of the realities of the Muslim community around the world and in Québec. They also remind us of the importance of strengthening intercultural dialog to ensure a better understanding of Islam.

The freedom of expression recognized in the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms is a central value of Québec society. However, it must be used responsibly in order not to spread prejudice against an entire community.

"I would like to congratulate the Muslim community for its constructive response to this difficult situation. Its efforts to inform and reach out to the broader community by opening the doors of mosques on two consecutive weekends is a first step toward a better understanding of Islam and a definite bridge between Muslims of Québec and all Quebecers," added Mrs. Thériault.

Québec is a tolerant and pacifist society that does not condone acts of hatred. Quebecers of all origins share these values, which are firmly rooted in our society. We must therefore work together to make Québec a model of openness and intercultural dialog.

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