



NEWS RELEASE

April Is Now Arab Heritage Month in Canada

Bill S-227, introduced by Senator Mohammad Al Zaibak, receives Royal Assent and becomes Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTAWA, ON — June 18, 2026 — Bill S-227, *An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month*, received Royal Assent today, formally designating the month of April as Arab Heritage Month in Canada. Having completed all stages in both Chambers, the bill was granted Royal Assent before the Senate adjourned — making the recognition law.

Introduced in the Senate by the Honourable Mohammad Al Zaibak, Independent Senator for Ontario, Bill S-227 recognizes the historic and ongoing contributions of Arab Canadians — a vibrant and diverse community of some 1.1 million people whose presence in Canada spans more than 140 years and reaches from coast to coast to coast. Among the youngest and fastest-growing communities in the country, more than half of Arab Canadians are under the age of 35.

The term “Arab” is broad. It encompasses anyone who lives in, or hails from, the Arab world, whose first language is Arabic, and who shares a deep sense of belonging to a common Arab culture, heritage and history.

“This is a proud day for Arab Canadians and for all Canadians. Arab Heritage Month invites every Canadian to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of a community that has helped build this country — and to recognize that Arab Canadians are woven into the very fabric of the Canadian story.”

— The Honourable Mohammad Al Zaibak, Senator for Ontario

Religiously, ethnically and geographically diverse, Canada’s Arab community of roughly 1.1 million people is richly diverse. Around half a million identify as Arab Muslims, half a million identify as Arab Christians of various denominations, and the rest include Arab Jews, and followers of ancient religions or people of no religious affiliation. Arab Canadians nonetheless share a common pride in Arab civilization and its contributions to the world.

“This recognition honours the past, but it also looks to the future. It tells the next generation that recognition matters, that belonging matters, and that celebrating our diversity makes Canada stronger.”

— The Honourable Mohammad Al Zaibak, Senator for Ontario

The Bill builds upon the work of former Bill C-232, introduced by the Honourable David McGuinty, Member of Parliament for Ottawa South, during the previous Parliament. Although that legislation passed unanimously in the House of Commons and reached third reading in the Senate, it died on the Order Paper following the dissolution of Parliament.

Senator Al Zaibak expressed his sincere gratitude to all Parliamentarians and the many community organizations across Canada whose years of dedication made Arab Heritage Month a reality.

Bill S-227, passed with support from senators and members of Parliament across all recognized parties and parliamentary groups, the Bill brings Canada to step with other countries around the World which formally celebrate Arab heritage. With Royal Assent now granted, April is established officially as Arab Heritage Month across Canada.

-30-

 **Read Senator Al Zaibak's Second Reading speech here:**
https://sencanada.ca/en/content/sen/chamber/451/debates/009db_2025-06-11-e#58


 **Listen Senator Al Zaibak's Second Reading speech here:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ooia7NbSSWY>

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BACKGROUND

Bill S-227, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month

Bill S-227 designates the month of April, in each and every year, as Arab Heritage Month in Canada. It is an acknowledgment of the contributions Arab Canadians have made — and continue to make — to the social, cultural, economic and civic life of the country.

The road to Bill S-227

The recognition began in the previous Parliament as Bill C-232, introduced by the Honourable David McGuinty, Member of Parliament for Ottawa South. That bill passed the House of Commons unanimously and reached third reading in the Senate before dying on the Order Paper upon the dissolution of Parliament. Determined to see the work completed, Senator Al Zaibak reintroduced the legislation in the Senate as Bill S-227. It passed all stages in the Senate and was sponsored in the House of Commons by the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Member of Parliament for York South—Weston, earning broad cross-party support before passing unanimously at third reading and receiving Royal Assent on June 18, 2026.

“An olive branch on the family tree”

In his second-reading address, Senator Al Zaibak drew on the title of Baha Abu-Laban’s landmark 1980 study, *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree: The Arabs in Canada*, to describe Arab Canadians as an olive branch on the Canadian family tree — rooted in the country’s history and growing with its future.

Quick facts

- Bill S-227 received Royal Assent on June 18, 2026, designating April of each year as Arab Heritage Month in Canada.
- Arab Canadians number approximately 1.1 million and have been part of Canada’s story for more than 140 years; the first recorded Arab immigrant, Ibrahim Abou Nader, arrived in Montreal in 1882.
- More than half of Arab Canadians are under the age of 35 — among the youngest and fastest-growing communities in the country.
- The bill was introduced by Senator Mohammad Al Zaibak in the Senate and sponsored by the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, MP, in the House of Commons, and passed with cross-party support in both Chambers.
- Canada joins the United States and a growing number of nations that formally celebrate Arab heritage.