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## **PRESS RELEASE**

June 30th, 2006

For Immediate Release

### **EXTRAORDINARY AFGHAN-MOSQUE PROJECT BY CANADIANS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED**



**The Canadian International Peace Project(CIPP) has successfully completed an extraordinary and unprecedented bridge building project in Afghanistan.**

The renovation and repair of an 80 year-old mosque, that was once the center of activity and society in the village of Andkhai located in Afghanistan has been successfully completed as an outreach project by Canadians from all backgrounds to demonstrate their support for ordinary citizens of Afghanistan who are struggling to rebuild their lives and communities after decades of civil war.

The brainchild of Mark Persaud, Founder and Chairman of the Canadian International Peace Project who was recently nominated for the prestigious 2006 Seoul Peace Prize, the project attracted support from Canadians of all backgrounds including Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs as well as secular Canadians. The students of Archbishop Romero Catholic Secondary School, a founding member of the Canadian International Peace Project, initiated the fundraising campaign for the project. The Christian and Muslim communities of Branford held a joint fundraiser which brought together these two communities for the first time. Other Canadians, including senior citizens from several Canadian churches, sent in letters of support and donations.

" This unprecedented project by Canadians of diverse backgrounds to reach out to Afghans and show our support as they struggle to bring peace and stability to their war weary country is a powerful illustration that ordinary Canadians can make unique contributions to peace, security and development in any part of the world. It is a wonderful statement of Canadian pluralism and Canadian values at its best which the Canadian International Peace Project strives to foster domestically and internationally and which is so desperately needed in many areas of the world," said Mark Persaud.

The Canadian International Peace Project is a novel and unique non-partisan organisation that has brought together diverse groups and individuals to work on issues and projects relating to local, national and international peace, security and development . Through partnership on events and projects, the CIPP fosters mutual respect and sustainable relationships among diverse groups including those in conflict with each other.

Ambassador Omar Samad of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Canada said, "It is great to see an uplifting Canadian project supported by good people of all faiths and origins implemented in a remote region of Afghanistan. I thank all those who supported this project, and I congratulate the Canadian International Peace Project and the International Development and Relief Foundation for successfully implementing the old Mosque renovation project in Andkhoi. We are looking forward to more innovative projects as part of the multi-faceted Canadian non-governmental initiatives in various parts of the country."

The construction work was completed the day before their New Year (Nowrose) on March 21<sup>st</sup>. This allowed the villagers to congregate in a grand ceremony in which they invited people from the surrounding villages to join them in prayer, celebration and festivities.



Since the successful completion, the mosque and community is once again starting to become more and more vibrant as people can now assemble and pray in a safe environment. Not only was a mosque rebuilt, but an entire community was restored as well. Currently, 80 boys and 20 girls have been enrolled in classes at the mosque that provide literacy training.



The people of Andkhoi are very pleased and thankful for the re-establishment of their mosque and there is still much more that could be done in the

village especially in regards to children's health and nourishment. The residents expressed their gratitude to the Canadian International Peace Project and its partners for providing the community in Andkhoi with this wonderful opportunity and expressed the hope they would be assisted further. The Canadian International Peace Project plans to continue to work in collaboration with the International Relief and Development Foundation on economic improvement projects in Afghanistan to help bring peace and stability to the region.



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