

The Charter specifically addresses and prohibits discrimination against those with physical or mental disabilities. If I may make a parenthetical observation this was a timely statement for the world, to be able to include this in our national Constitution during the International Year of the Disabled.

I opened my remarks by referring to the multiple kinds and categories of minorities making up Canada. You, my friends, give considerable proof to the multicultural composition of this country - and I hope you share my pride that this has been enshrined in the Constitution in the words: The Charter "shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians".

This is not a matter of preserving folkdances and international cuisine. It is a philosophical recognition of the universality and dignity of man, and a practical recognition that Canada is a commonwealth of more than 70 cultures. Multiculturalism is a strength of Canada and its impact is felt everywhere. The diversity of ideas exchanged in the universities as in the marketplaces among Canadians who have come here, have chosen Canada as their home, is exciting and rewarding.

Many of you are in business, and I'm sure involved in export or import activities. You are very important elements of the Canadian economy because of your skills and particular knowledge of languages and customs of other lands. Dealing in foreign markets requires these basic abilities. But it also calls for new kinds of corporate managers, flexible cosmopolitans, aware of cultural sensitivities and foreign practices. Entrepreneurs who cut costs through knowledge of the cultural effects on behaviour, the motivation of workers in other lands, or the interpretation of contracts and documents.

The preservation of multiculturalism in the Constitution is good for the so-called minorities, but it is also good for the whole of Canada. It gives all the opportunity to compete on equal footings, to bring into play unique talents and abilities. The freedoms of speech and free association are clearly elements preserving and enhancing multiculturalism.