

As a result of these contributions, the average immigrant-headed household effectively transfers about \$210 annually to the Canadian born population.

Aware of the potential opportunities of diversity in the business world, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce interacts with international commerce organizations. The Government's Federal Business Development Bank consults regularly with ethnocultural business associations in major centres.

The Department of Canadian Heritage has published a directory of contacts for businesses and governments wishing to network with the Canadian ethnocultural business community on domestic or international business matters.

## The Arts

Artists with origins in all parts of the world now enrich the Canadian cultural scene. For example, an increasing number of writers of various ethnocultural origins have received national and international recognition, including the Governor General's and Booker prizes. Similarly, Canadians of diverse ethnocultural background are making significant contributions to film, video, performance and visual arts in Canada.

## Multicultural Programs

Community-based organizations and coalitions, as well as institutions, play a major role in the promotion of racial equity, cross-cultural understanding and civic spirit. Their efforts are supported by the Government's multiculturalism programs, which provide financial help and advice to ethnocultural community groups, agencies serving immigrants, immigrant women's groups and race relations coalitions, among others, as well as Canadian institutions and, in some cases, individuals.

Services to first-generation Canadians (citizens born elsewhere) providing information about Canada are a large part of many community-based programs. In partnership with the Canadian government, various institutions, including the police, the media, health and social services, unions and municipal governments, also participate in education programs designed to improve race relations and help people adapt to cultural diversity.

## Law and Policy

While Canada's history contains examples of injustices toward minority groups, Canada's citizens, institutions and governments are actively working toward eliminating discrimination.

To enable all members of Canadian society to exercise fully, and with equity, their citizenship rights, responsibilities and privileges, Canada has developed concrete, forward-looking programs and laws.

In July 1988, the Government of Canada acknowledged and honoured the changing face of the country in ground-breaking legislation, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. The Act states that every citizen, regardless of origin, has an equal chance to participate in all aspects of the country's collective life. The legislation is designed to "encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character." The Act also gave the federal government responsibility for promoting multiculturalism throughout its departments and agencies.

The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* is the culmination of a series of developments over the past two decades.

- When multiculturalism became official government policy in

1971, a modest grants program was set up to assist community groups, coalitions, immigrant support networks and citizen advocacy groups.

- In 1972, a minister of state for multiculturalism was appointed.
- In 1977, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* was passed. It provides legal safeguards against discrimination based on several grounds including race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion or sex.
- In 1981, the multiculturalism mandate was expanded to include race relations.
- In 1982, multiculturalism and equality rights were enshrined in Canada's Constitution in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- In 1986, employment equity legislation was passed.
- In 1989, the Government launched an annual anti-racism campaign.

As well as federal government initiatives, since 1971 most provinces have established their own formal multiculturalism policies and programs.

## Commitment

Canada's commitment to multiculturalism is more than words on paper or laws in Parliament. Multiculturalism is woven into the very fabric of Canadian life. By recognizing multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of the country's identity and heritage, Canadians of all cultural origins have the opportunity to contribute to the common goals of equality, national unity, social harmony and economic prosperity. 

