

THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS ONE OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES GOVERNING LIFE IN CANADIAN SOCIETY.

OVER THE CENTURIES, CANADA HAS BEEN BUILT ON SUCCESSIVE WAVES OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD WHO COME HERE WITH HOPES OF IMPROVING THEIR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OR IN SEARCH OF FREEDOM AND SECURITY.

THE CANADIAN PEOPLE HAVE WANTED TO HAVE THESE VALUES RELATED TO RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, REFLECTED IN OUR INSTITUTIONS.

OUR GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED TO THIS DESIRE. THE DEFENCE AND PROMOTING OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS.

IN THIS REGARD, CANADIANS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF PROFESSIONS NOT ONLY HAVE RIGHTS, BUT ARE UNDER CERTAIN OBLIGATIONS.

LIKE ALL CITIZENS, THEY MUST RESPECT THE STANDARDS SET BY THE GOVERNMENTS AND THE COURTS.

THIS IS TO BE EXPECTED. BUT SOME PROFESSIONS PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

THE LEGAL PROFESSION, FOR EXAMPLE, IS ON THE FRONT LINES IN THE DEFENCE AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. IN OTHER CASES - AND HERE I AM REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO THE DISEASE OF AIDS - THE MEDICAL PROFESSION PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS. BUT THESE ARE NOT THE ONLY PROFESSIONS INVOLVED IN HUMAN RIGHTS. THEY ARE ONLY TWO EXAMPLES.

HUMAN RIGHTS CAN BE PROMOTED PROPERLY ONLY WHEN THERE IS SUFFICIENT EDUCATION AND INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE ABOUT THEM. EVEN TODAY, THERE ARE MANY WHO DO NOT HAVE AN ADEQUATE AWARENESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. TEACHERS MUST PREPARE THEIR STUDENTS TO FULLY ASSUME BOTH THEIR RIGHTS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN SOCIETY.

THOSE IN THE MEDIA ALSO PLAY A FORMATIVE ROLE WHEN THEY DENOUNCE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND INFORM PEOPLE OF THEIR RIGHTS.

IN FACT, ALL THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ARE INVOLVED IN THIS WORK, SINCE IT IS THEIR DUTY, NOT ONLY TO INFORM THEIR MEMBERS OF THEIR RIGHTS, BUT ALSO THOSE OF THEIR CLIENTS.

IN A WORLD CHARACTERIZED BY A GROWING INTERDEPENDENCY, PEOPLE ARE INEVITABLY AFFECTED BY EACH OTHER'S SITUATIONS.

THIS ALSO HOLDS TRUE IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

I WISH YOU ALL THE BEST IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS OVER THE COMING DAYS.

WELCOME TO CANADA, AND WELCOME TO MONTREAL.