

and the strengthening of democratic institutions, as well as the positive response of the Government to this proposal reflect an important development in the evolution of our society. For Canada and for many of its friends and allies, this development represents a new stage in recognizing the fundamental importance of human rights and reaffirming our commitment to promote human rights at home and abroad.

4. Canada has already moved through important stages in the development of a legislative basis for the protection of human rights in Canada; namely the Canadian Bill of Rights, proclaimed in 1960, the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982. In the provincial domain, statutory provisions prohibiting certain forms of discrimination have existed since 1932. In 1962, the first comprehensive human rights act, the Ontario Human Rights Code entered into force. There followed in New Brunswick, in 1967, the Human Rights Act; in Nova Scotia, in 1969, the Human Rights Act; in Manitoba, in 1970, the Human Rights Act; in Alberta, in 1972, the Individuals' Rights Protection Act; in Newfoundland, in 1974, The Newfoundland Human Rights Code; in Prince Edward Island, in 1975, the Human Rights Act; in Quebec, in 1975, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms; in Saskatchewan, in 1978, The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code; and in British Columbia, in 1979, the Human Rights Code.

5. To be sure the history of our debates and efforts in the area of human rights has seen its highs and its lows. There has been progress, but also setbacks for the protection of the rights of women, native peoples, minorities, children, the elderly and the handicapped. However, over the years the rights of such groups have been better recognized, better defined and better guaranteed. Driven by a sense of justice and fair play we have evolved foundations and safeguards for such rights in our institutions. The evolution is continuing although not without difficulty. The human rights laws proclaimed since 1960 are historic markers on the road Canada has travelled in its development of consciousness and commitment. In the wake of comparable debates, the international community also has established landmark legislation in the human rights area.

6. Our review of past and present approaches reveals that the Canadian commitment to the promotion of human rights internationally has developed quite remarkably over the past 10 to 15 years. The level of activity of federal and provincial authorities and of non-governmental organizations has become significant. In view of the sensitivity of human rights questions in all countries, including our own, Canada's efforts have been focused primarily on enhancing the capability for the development and enforcement of international standards of human rights, of relevant multilateral