

APPENDIX

Federal Government's Response to Book IV of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

The purpose of this document is to present a survey of the principal policies relating to the maintenance and development of multiculturalism throughout Canada and to provide a summary of government decisions on the recommendations made in Book IV of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.

The document outlines in Part A the federal government's response in general to the recommendations of Book IV of the royal commission report and gives some of the reasons for its belief in multiculturalism.

In Part B are outlined the policy objectives which will serve to guide the federal government's programs in this area.

Part C contains a general description of the programs to be undertaken by the federal government and its agencies to implement and advance the policies resulting from acceptance of the recommendations of Book IV of the royal commission's report.

A summary of the recommendations of Book IV of the royal commission's report and the government's response to them is in Part D.

PART A

Federal Response in General

Book IV of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism contains 16 recommendations (listed in Section D) of which eight are addressed specifically to the federal government or its agencies. Three deal with matters under exclusive provincial jurisdiction. One of the recommendations urges federal financial aid to linguistically handicapped children in public schools. Another is concerned with conditions for citizenship, the right to vote, and the right to stand for election to public office and thus is addressed to both the federal and the provincial governments. One appeals to agencies at all three levels of government to provide support to cultural and research organizations. The remaining recommendations are addressed to Canadian Universities.

The government accepts and endorses the recommendations and spirit of Book IV of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. It believes the time is overdue for the people of Canada to become more aware of the rich tradition of the many cultures we have in Canada. Canada's citizens come from almost every country in the world, and bring with them every major world religion and language. This cultural diversity endows all Canadians with a great variety of human experience. The government regards this as a heritage to treasure and believes that Canada would be the poorer if we adopted assimilation programs forcing our citizens to forsake and forget the cultures they have brought to us.

The federal government hopes that the provinces will also respond positively to those recommendations which the commissioners addressed to them. The Prime Minister has written to each of the provincial premiers outlining the policies and programs which the Federal Government is initiating and asking for their co-operation. Some provinces have already taken the initiative and are responding to the recommendations directed to them.

The government while responding positively to the commission's recommendations, wishes to go beyond them to the spirit of the Book IV to ensure that Canada's cultural diversity continues.

Cultural diversity throughout the world is being eroded by the impact of industrial technology, mass communications and urbanization. Many writers have discussed this as the creation of a mass society—in which mass produced culture and entertainment and large impersonal institutions threaten to denature and depersonalize man. One of man's basic needs is a sense of belonging, and a good deal of contemporary social unrest—in all age groups—exists because this need has not been met. Ethnic groups are certainly not the only way in which this need for belonging can be met, but they have been an important one in Canadian society. Ethnic pluralism can help us overcome or prevent the homogenization and depersonalization of mass society. Vibrant ethnic groups can give Canadians of the second, third, and subsequent generations a feeling that they are connected with tradition and with human experience in various parts of the world and different periods of time.

Two misconceptions often arise when cultural diversity is discussed.

(a) Cultural Identity and National Allegiance.

The sense of identity developed by each citizen as a unique individual is distinct from his national allegiance. There is no reason to suppose that a citizen who identifies himself with pride as a Chinese-Canadian, who is deeply involved in the cultural activities of the Chinese community in Canada, will be less loyal or concerned with Canadian matters than a citizen of Scottish origin who takes part in a bagpipe band or a highland dancing group. Cultural identity is not the same thing as allegiance to a country. Each of us is born into a particular family with a distinct heritage: that is, everyone—French, English, Italian and Slav included—has an "ethnic" background. The more secure we feel in one particular social context, the more we are free to explore our identity beyond it. Ethnic groups often provide people with a sense of belonging which can make them better able to cope with the rest of society than they would as isolated individuals. Ethnic loyalties need not, and usually do not, detract from wider loyalties to community and country.

Canadian identity will not be undermined by multiculturalism. Indeed, we believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group