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## Children get special home

The five-bedroom house is the quietest on the quiet residential street in Vancouver, according to the *Canadian Press*.

The house is home to Doug and Charlene Clifton, a deaf couple who run a group home for up to five deaf children.

Clifton, a technician with the Western Institute for the Deaf who specializes in inventing aids for the deaf, has adapted the home to his young guests' needs in a pilot project funded by the British Columbia education department.

Lights flash in every room when callers press the doorbell or call on the telephone. If there were a fire, every light in the house would pulsate, sounding a silent alarm.

The phone is connected to a computer keyboard so the deaf can converse with similarly equipped callers by typing their messages back and forth.

Clifton has even devised a silent alarm clock — the lights flash in each child's room at wakeup time each morning. One sleepyhead who slept through the bombardment of blinking lights now has a timed vibrator on her bed that gently shakes her awake.

The Clifton's seven-year-old daughter Lisa is the only one in the house who can hear and acts as an interpreter when visitors who do not know sign language come to call.

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## Alfalfa production could increase

Researchers at Agriculture Canada's Beaverlodge, Alberta research station have made findings that could dramatically expand alfalfa production in western Canada.

There are about 2.4 million hectares of land in western Canada where alfalfa production is limited or non-existent because of the high acidity of the soil.

"When the soil is too acidic — where it has a pH level below 6.0 — the bacteria on the roots of the alfalfa plant that fix nitrogen have trouble surviving," says Wendell Rice, who heads the environment and soils section at the station.

Until now, the only way to overcome this problem was to add lime to the soil, which is expensive because of the size of the areas involved and the transportation costs.

Dr. Rice approached the problem from

another angle — by developing new strains of bacteria that perform well at pH levels between 5.6 and 6.0. He began his program by collecting healthy rhizobium bacteria from nodules on alfalfa growing in acid-soil areas.

Alfalfa seedlings were then inoculated with the bacteria and planted in acidic soil. The most efficient bacteria strains were selected and put through a rigorous series of tests in soils of different pH levels.

Final selections now have been made and two new strains of rhizobium bacteria will be available for next year's seeding in western Canada.

"The one strain is most effective for soil pH levels ranging from 5.6 to 6.0. The second works best in more neutral soils of 6.0 to 7.0," Dr. Rice says.

"If these new strains are used widely by inoculant manufacturers they could help farmers in areas with low pH levels increase alfalfa production by up to 50 per cent," he said.

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## Snowflake-shaped science centre

An \$18-million, snowflake-shaped science centre will be built in Sudbury, Ontario starting this March and is scheduled for completion in 1983, the city's centennial year.

A report released by a study team, headed by two architects, projects that the centre will attract 436,000 people a year, which would make it the largest single tourist attraction in Northern Ontario.

What is proposed is a six-sided centre set inside and above a rock knob on the western shore of Lake Ramsay. The public will enter the central building through an underground tunnel from a smaller building.

The project's design also includes a wharf and nine science pavillons, along with a physics playground in an outdoor park setting.

Inco Limited officials have announced that the company will donate \$5 million to the project over the next five years, the largest single donation the company has ever made.

The study team is basing the architecture on joining two images: the early crater of the Sudbury Basin and the snowflake.

"The crater, resembling the open pit, symbolizes the early beginnings of the

region and the best mining techniques in the world," said Toronto architect Raymond Moriyama, who headed the study team along with Sudbury architect John Stefura.

"The snowflake is the symbol of the glaciation and the climate that shaped the northern land. Thus the synthesis: the snowflake settling gently over a rugged crater," said Mr. Moriyama.

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## Federal study assesses attitudes on foreign aid

Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan recently made public the findings of a federal survey of Canadian attitudes towards international development aid.

The survey was conducted on behalf of the Canadian International Development Agency during September and October 1980. The survey, consisting of 1,034 telephone interviews across Canada, was designed to assess Canadian awareness of Canada's Third World aid programs.

Dr. MacGuigan said the survey would provide direction to the Futures Secretariat now being established to provide information about the problems of developing nations.

The most significant survey result indicated a considerable lack of knowledge and awareness by Canadians of development issues, Canada's aid program and CIDA.

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## Build on support

Dr. MacGuigan emphasized the importance of public understanding and support in realizing Canada's foreign aid objectives and said it was necessary to build on the broad support that already exists in Canada for foreign aid. This could be done, he said, through organizations such as the Futures Secretariat recently announced by CIDA.

The minister also stressed the importance of mounting within the next few months a public information program involving international development organizations. He said he encouraged such initiatives as *Agenda for a Small Planet*, a series of television programs about world development, proposed by CIDA in collaboration with the United Nations and television networks in Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States.