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Message from the Minister

It gives me great pleasure to once again raise the curtain on Canada's international cultural affairs agenda for the coming months. In addition to the *Calendar of Events*, you will find in this issue of the *Cultural Attaché* news items on three important cultural initiatives by the *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*.

Canada's Year of Asia Pacific (CYAP), a celebration of our links to countries of the Asia Pacific Region will demonstrate the effectiveness of culture as an instrument for building strong and sustainable international relations for Canada. In anticipation of our role as host country for *Asia Pacific Economic Council (APEC) Economic Leaders' meeting* in Vancouver in November 1997, DFAIT will assist and encourage Canada/Asia Pacific cultural joint ventures in communities all across Canada. Participants from abroad are being invited to send us their best performing and visual artists and their productions. In some cases, visiting artists will collaborate in their initiatives with Canadian communities who share their cultural roots. Culture is a major component of the CYAP alongside an equally intensive program of activities aimed at building partnerships in business, investment, youth and other ventures. Details related to the Cultural component of CYAP can be found on the back page of this issue.

The official opening of the refurbished *Canadian Cultural Centre* in Paris by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on January 22 celebrates the completion of several years of work by our Embassy in Paris to ensure that Canada's image in the European cultural cross roads remains strong and modern. At its core there will be a *Centre for New Media* which together with the private sector will exploit the interdependence of Canada's innovative and cultural creativity, and simultaneously serve as a medium to showcase Canada's artistic and literary accomplishments. The Centre also supports the Canadian Studies community in Europe by facilitating access to research material from a variety of sources on this side of the Atlantic.

The third initiative concerns the Department's new guidelines for responding to the many requests received to support international activities by Canadian artists and cultural groups. The new guidelines aim at facilitating the process. They also reconfirm the objective of the international touring component of the *International Cultural Relations* program as an instrument of Canadian diplomacy. I am confident that these guidelines will assist us in ensuring that the full spectrum of Canada's geographic and cultural diversity will be reflected abroad.

Sincerely,

