

Government Orders

The Department of Canadian Heritage is active in three main areas that have a common objective namely, promoting Canadian identity. First, the department is the chief custodian of the natural and physical heritage comprising our national parks, our historic monuments and canals; these sites highlight the uniqueness of our country and contribute to Canada's reputation as a tourist destination. Our rich natural and historic heritage includes 36 national parks, 750 historic sites, nine historic canals and four marine areas located throughout Canada. Stretching from Ellesmere Island National Park in the Arctic Circle to Point Pelee National Park on the shores of the Great Lakes, from the Cape Spear lighthouse on the Atlantic coast to Pacific Rim National Park, they are among the most beautiful gems of world heritage.

• (1205)

Parks Canada will continue to protect, preserve and promote these sites which Canadians hold dear. The traditions of the Parks Canada program, now embraced by the Department of Canadian Heritage, have very deep roots. They date back to 1885, when Canada's first national park was created in Banff. Our network of historic sites was established more than 75 years ago. In a short while, we will be celebrating with joy and pride the 75th anniversary of Parks Canada.

Canada's parks and historic sites are important to the national economy, generating annual revenue in excess of one billion dollars, including some \$275 million from foreign tourists, and providing jobs for roughly 30,000 Canadian men and women. They are the lifeblood of the Canadian tourism industry; in 1992, almost 27 million people visited our national parks and historic sites.

Second, the Department of Canadian Heritage devotes much of its attention to promotion of the official languages, amateur sport, community support and participation and other cultural elements that enrich our own culture and set us apart in today's world economy.

The history of this country has to a large extent been shaped by successive waves of immigration and the interaction between the newcomers and the society in their new country. The way immigrants adapt their way of life to Canadian society will continue to be a determining factor in the Canadian identity, and the Department of Canadian Heritage plans to take an active role in making their integration as successful as possible.

We have to realize that the co-existence of cultures is one of the biggest challenges facing countries around the world as the century draws to a close. Canada has always been in step with the many cultures that can be found here. This diversity includes vast human resources that are part of Canada today and that could be, in a world with an increasingly globalized economy and culture, a definite asset in maintaining our place on the world stage. It is also a virtually limitless cultural resource that

we can use to our advantage and that sets us apart from other countries.

The Department of Canadian Heritage plans to tap these resources and encourage all cultural communities to contribute to the growth and development of Canadian society. We hope to rally the mighty forces of multiculturalism behind a cultural identity that is uniquely Canadian.

Amateur sport and related events, like the Canada Games and the XVth Commonwealth Games held this summer in Victoria, are a fundamental vehicle for fostering and illustrating important Canadian values such as the pursuit of excellence and cultural diversity. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to say again how happy we are to be hosting the 1999 Pan-American Games in Winnipeg. We also hope that Quebec city will be given the honour of playing host to the Winter Olympics in 2002 and are working to make that a reality.

• (1210)

We have inherited a country whose strength comes not only from its cultural diversity, but also its linguistic duality. Preserving and promoting our official languages do not make Canada a real Tower of Babel. It is important not only to protect the right of individuals to speak whichever language they prefer, but also to realize that the English and French languages open the doors to two of the greatest sources of universal culture.

Canada's official languages are inextricably linked to Canadian identity and culture. For this reason, it is vital for a department like ours and for society as a whole to promote them and broaden their sphere of influence.

[*English*]

Moreover, in these days of market globalization, knowing two of the most widely spoken languages in the world is a definite plus. English is an official language in no fewer than 33 countries around the world, French in 25 countries. From a purely economic standpoint our two official languages already give us an edge in our efforts to conquer new markets.

Of course we must not forget the incredible number of international languages spoken by new Canadians. Their language skills are critical in expanding our trade and cultural relations to new countries.

The fact remains however that the linguistic landscape in Canada is dominated by two official languages as English or French is spoken by 98.6 per cent of the population. To ensure that both languages continue to thrive in all regions of the country the Department of Canadian Heritage is committed to supporting the development and enhancing the vitality of linguistic minority communities in all sectors and encouraging Canadians to learn their second official language.

Specifically the department's aim is to give these communities the means to ensure their own economic development which is the key to a better future. With this objective in mind it has taken measures to encourage all federal institutions to promote