

Society. The Minister supported a National Conference on Visible Minorities and the Media, a National Symposium on Race Relations and the Law, and commissioned situation reports for 11 cities across Canada. The purpose of these reports was to obtain a non-quantitative idea of the kinds of problems that communities in Canada face in the area of race relations.

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The results of the various studies and the recommendations of the conferences suggested the need for a high-profile, non-partisan search by Parliament for positive, constructive models, which promote harmonious relations between visible minority Canadians and other Canadians, and for ways to increase the participation of visible minorities in all aspects of Canadian society. The Committee was established and given its particular mandate specifically because there was already ample evidence of denial of equality of opportunity to visible minorities. There is evidence of an unequal distribution of economic, political, and social benefits. There is evidence in public opinion polls, which show that some white Canadians have negative attitudes toward visible minorities. There is evidence of racially discriminatory mechanisms that provide differential advantage and privilege to people of different races. There is also evidence of cultural values, norms, and behaviour of visible minorities which lead them to be discriminated against. At the same time, values highly cherished by the majority are often considered the only acceptable ones.

The Committee was mandated to seek solutions but discovered it was not possible to seek solutions without the context of a sometimes vividly stated problem. In Whitehorse, Margaret Joe stated, "I have first of all to tell you about the problems before I can tell you about anything constructive that you might want to hear. It would be very nice if we were able to wave a magic wand and the troubles of racism would be all over". The Committee started off looking for positive models and was encouraged by those that were presented. Nevertheless it must be said Members had expected to find more positive models than they did.

One of the first issues that became evident as the Committee examined briefs and heard testimony was that different visible minorities were not participating in Canadian society for different reasons. For example, some visible minorities were disproportionately unemployed, while others were employed but not in keeping with their qualifications. Some were in well-paid, high-technology positions but not in decision-making or management. Some were unemployed because of the non-assertive nature of their culture, while others were not participating because their aggressive business practices were deemed far outside the Canadian norm. The Committee has attempted to fine-tune its recommendations to account for these variations in the reasons for being denied full participation in Canadian society.

A second difficult issue that confronted the Committee is the notion held by many Canadians that those who have been here for many generations are entitled to more opportunities than those who have been here for a short period of time. A number of witnesses who appeared before the Committee agreed with the principle of differential treatment for themselves and other recent immigrants, but clearly rejected the principle being applied to their children. The Committee would like to dissuade all Canadians from the belief that citizens of Canada whose heritage is long are somehow entitled to more opportunity than those citizens whose Canadian heritage is just beginning. All citizens of Canada are entitled to equality of opportunity.