

Supply

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act sets out the policy of the Government of Canada to promote the full and equitable participation of people and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution of Canadian society.

The act also calls on the government to assist in the elimination of any barrier to such participation. It commits the government to promoting the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins.

In addition, it encourages and assists the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character.

The objectives of the race relations and cross-cultural understanding program are to foster the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, to assist Canadian institutions in becoming responsive and adapting to Canada's multicultural reality, and to promote cross-cultural understanding and the principles of equality and access. Through 1990-91, institutional change, public education, community advocacy, cross-cultural training and research have been the five mutually reinforcing objectives supported by the program to foster equality and access for all Canadians and to promote social change.

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Public education initiatives, especially around March 21, the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination, were supported, as were activities addressing the race relations concerns of visible minority and aboriginal youth and of aboriginal Canadians. These have been achieved with the crucial help of the community and the fruitful co-operation of institutions and organizations.

We also have a human rights program. The purpose of the human rights program is to promote the development, understanding, respect for and enjoyment of human rights and to facilitate the implementation of Canada's domestic and international human rights obligations. Its activities include education and promotion, co-ordination and presentation of Canada's human rights reports to international bodies, federal-provincial-territorial co-ordination to fulfil Canada's international human rights obligations and interdepartmental co-ordination.

Since 1986 the program has carried out a range of activities designed to promote and protect human rights: for example, to work with non-governmental groups, NGOs, educators and others working in the human rights field, including both specialists and those who from time to time carry out human rights activities and to carry out other public education activities. It is there to serve as the central point of reference for the federal government's domestic interest in human rights and as part of this latter mandate, to develop interdepartmental and federal-provincial-territorial consultations and co-ordination to implement human rights treaties.

Powers, duties and functions of the Department of Secretary of State were transferred by section 9 of the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Act. As well, the number of reports that the directorate prepares in consultation with federal departments, provinces and territories, has greatly increased over the last two decades. Reports are prepared to meet legal obligations under international treaties that Canada has ratified and to meet other commitments relating to Canada's membership in the UN and the OAS. The directorate often participates in the review of the reports by international bodies.

I would like to go on to the women's program. The women's program attempts to promote economic equality. Women are employed in every sector of Canada's economy and make a major contribution to our country's growth and prosperity. Despite this fact, there are still many hurdles preventing them from fully participating in the economy and from receiving recognition for the role in the labour force and at home.

Many of the groups funded by the women's program are working to improve economic opportunities for women. For example, a group of women lawyers in Saskatchewan is working with farm women. Their aim is to identify the economic and legal concerns of farm women with regard to property, pensions and family law.

Another voluntary group has documented the flexibility needed by employees balancing work and family responsibilities and has made recommendations in this area. In New Brunswick a group of francophone women is working to have the experience of homemakers and volunteers recognized when they look for work.