



Speech Module

CARING CANADA:

A just and inclusive society

Canada is a bilingual, multicultural country with Aboriginal, English and French roots. Under the Official Languages Act, Canada has two official languages: English and French. Accordingly, federal institutions must offer bilingual services on an equal basis. At present, bilingualism is a passion for our youth, the most bilingual generation in Canada's history. As of the last census, no fewer than 2.7 million young Canadians were studying French or English as a second language. Therefore, bilingualism is more than a legal requirement.

Respecting the rights and meeting the special needs of Aboriginal communities is a top priority for Canada. The recent Speech from the Throne sums up the position of the government: "As a country, we must be direct about the magnitude of the challenge and ambitious in our commitment to tackle the most pressing problems facing Aboriginal people. Reaching our objectives will take time, but we must not be deterred by the length of the journey or the obstacles that we may encounter along the way."

Canada also recognizes and values its rich ethnic and racial diversity. It works to ensure equality in social, economic, cultural and political life for all elements of our society. As a result, Canada has escaped many of the tensions that afflict other nations. Individual Canadians enjoy all the benefits of living in a comfortably diverse, multicultural, bilingual society.

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act enables people to develop in their own way, keeping their roots. Immigration has outpaced the natural birth rate and accounts for 53 percent of the population growth. While racial discrimination and cultural clashes persist to some extent, they are far outweighed by the good will of Canadians and our respect for the shared humanity of all. This is why people from all parts of the world can be absorbed peacefully in our country, including the 20 000 to 30 000 refugees and displaced persons accepted by Canada each year.

