

Twenty-four years ago, on December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This twenty-fourth commemoration of that historic occasion again serves to remind mankind of the inherent dignity and worth of all persons and of the fundamental rights and freedoms to which they are entitled.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights serves as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations and embodies those aspirations to which the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, drafted in 1945, made reference by its affirmation of "faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person".

Despite the fact that it contains no binding obligations, the Declaration has profoundly influenced public attitudes everywhere. It has been cited in governmental legislation. It has also inspired a number of international conventions, declarations and recommendations dealing with marriage, the rights of women, children and the aged, the right of asylum, statelessness, slavery, forced labour and discrimination in regards to race, education, religion, employment and occupation.

Although much has been accomplished on the legislative side of the United Nations work in the field of human rights, progress in implementation has sometimes been slow. The ability of the Canadian Government to ratify or adhere to international conventions on human rights depends not only on the views of the federal government but also on the agreement of all the provincial governments. In the past, efforts to obtain provincial concurrence for adherence to international conventions on human rights have not proved as successful as the Government would have wished. The Government has not, however, relented in its efforts in this field, with the result that during 1972 provincial agreement was obtained to ratify two of the basic human rights conventions of the International Labour Organization, Convention 87 concerning Freedom of Association and the Right to Organize, and Convention 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value.

It is my sincere hope that during the coming year the continuing federal-provincial consultations on human rights matters will enable the Government to sign and ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol.