



FOREWORD

This National Report on Population is submitted as part of Canada's preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in September 1994. Through the sharing of the information in this report, Canada wishes to contribute to the preparation of an analysis and synthesis of the varied experiences of countries which may serve as a useful tool for the design and modification of future population and development strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Canada occupies a land mass that is among the largest of any country in the world. Yet its population is scarcely half that of the United Kingdom, whose territory is a small fraction of Canada's. A glance at a demographic map also confirms the extremely uneven way in which its population is distributed. The overwhelming majority of Canadians live in the southern portion of the country, mostly concentrated within a relatively short distance of the long border separating it from the United States. The vast hinterland to the north is sparsely settled, with huge tracts inhospitable for physical and climatic reasons to permanent human settlement on a large scale. The sheer physical size of the country, combined with the uneven pattern of settlement, has obvious implications in a wide variety of public policy areas, notably the cost of maintaining adequate transportation and communications infrastructures, and for meeting the objective of providing quality services to people wherever they may live.

Ethnically, culturally and linguistically, Canadians are a diverse people. Aboriginal inhabitants comprise roughly 3 percent of the population, while the balance is made up of the descendants of the original French-speaking European settlers, of English-speaking colonists who

followed, and then of waves of migrants from all quarters of the globe. Since 1951, foreign-born Canadians have accounted for around 16 percent of the total population, with their concentration ranging considerably higher in the large urban centres which attract the most immigrants. However, while through this period the proportion of foreign to native-born has remained quite steady, the composition of the immigration movement has changed from one dominated by Europeans to one where Asians, Latin Americans, and Africans represent about 65 percent, with Asian predominating. It is reasonable to conclude that the growing diversity of Canada's population will result in a continued call for greater attention to culturally sensitive programs in the health and social service sector generally.

Canada is a federal state composed of 10 provinces and two territories. It has two official languages, English and French, and is governed as a parliamentary democracy. In common with other industrialized nations, Canada has not adopted explicit population policies. Instead, Canada has articulated separate groups of policies, programmes and legislation concerning employment, immigration, health, income security and