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MCDUGALL PROTESTS U.S. RESTRICTIONS ON CANADIAN ENTERTAINERS AND ATHLETES

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today announced that she has written to U.S. Secretary of State James Baker expressing Canada's concern that provisions in the new U.S. Immigration Act would restrict access by foreign performers to the U.S. market.

"The United States is a crucial market for Canadian performers, and these regulations would seriously affect professional Canadian athletes, artists and technicians," said Mrs. McDougall. "If they are implemented, the Canadian government may be required to impose reciprocal measures."

The Minister said that the Canadian Embassy in Washington and Canadian consulates across the United States have been presenting Canada's case against the new regulations to Members of Congress and the U.S. Administration.

The provisions of the new U.S. Immigration Act are open to public comment for a 30-day period ending August 12, 1991. Mrs. McDougall said that her Department will continue to monitor the situation closely, in collaboration with Canada's cultural and sporting community and agencies such as the Canada Council.

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For further information, media representatives may contact:

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The New U.S. Immigration Act
and its Impact on
Canadian Professional Performers and Athletes

- The new, more restrictive qualifications for visa categories threaten to limit access to the U.S. entertainment and sports market for Canadian and other foreign professional artists and athletes.
- Performers who qualify as having "extraordinary abilities" will be allowed to enter the U.S. However,
- An annual quota of 25,000 has been set for all other foreign professionals. Members of an orchestra or a hockey team will be counted individually. It is feared that since this is a worldwide total, the quota will be filled quickly.
- The stipulation that members of a company or team must have a "sustained and substantial relationship with that group" for at least a year would exclude new members, and is unrealistic given the tendency for organizations to contract artists or athletes only for the season.
- The requirement that visa applications be made no more than 90 days prior to entry makes planning difficult for Canadian managers and U.S. presenters, who risk having years of preparations undone by last-minute visa difficulties.
- Regulations to implement the legislation have been published in the Federal Register; for a period of 30 days, up to August 12, 1991, public comment may be sent to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. The Department can incorporate suggested changes in modifications of the regulations. The U.S. Immigration Act is scheduled to come into effect on Oct. 1, 1991.