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CANADIAN ACCESSION TO INTERNATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS COVENANTS

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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The Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations today deposited with the Secretary General Canada's Instruments of Accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the latter's Optional Protocol. This was announced by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, in the House of Commons on Tuesday, May 18.

These three international instruments were adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1966 but they only came into force earlier this year, on the 3rd of January and the 23rd of March respectively. They will enter into force for Canada three months after the deposit of our Instruments of Accession.

Canada's deposit of its Instruments of Accession followed from the Federal-Provincial Conference on Human Rights which was held last December under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of State, the Honourable J. Hugh Faulkner. This conference, and the earlier consultations which were held with the provinces, enabled agreement to be reached on the modalities of Canada's accession to these international instruments and on their implementation within Canada, given the division of jurisdiction between the two levels of government in the field of human rights and the fact that several of the provisions of the Covenants fall within provincial jurisdiction.

Because the provisions of the Covenants affect several different areas within federal jurisdiction, responsibility for their implementation will lie with a number of federal departments. The Department of the Secretary of State will assure the necessary coordination. On their part, the provinces have already made known their intention to take whatever steps are appropriate, and their wish to hold regular consultations with the Federal Government, with respect to the implementation of these instruments.

In becoming a party to these United Nations Human Rights Instruments, Canada has taken an important step in the further recognition and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The obligations which it has thereby accepted before the international community are not only an additional guarantee to Canadians but also the expression of our desire fully to carry out our role as a member of the international community in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.