

**Speaking Notes  
for  
Diane Fulford  
Assistant Deputy Minister,  
Citizenship and Heritage  
Department of Canadian  
Heritage**

**On the occasion of the  
Review of Canada's 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>  
Reports  
on the International  
Convention on the  
Elimination of all Forms of  
Racial Discrimination**

**Geneva, Switzerland  
February 20, 2007**

**CHECK AGAINST  
DELIVERY**

**Notes pour l'allocution**

**de  
Diane Fulford  
Sous-ministre adjointe,  
Citoyenneté et patrimoine  
Ministère du Patrimoine  
canadien**

**À l'occasion de l'examen des  
17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> rapports du  
Canada  
sur la Convention  
internationale  
sur l'élimination de toutes  
les formes  
de discrimination raciale**

**Genève (Suisse)  
Le 20 février 2007**

**LE DISCOURS  
PRONONCÉ FAIT FOI**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Committee, Canada is honoured to appear before you today to discuss our implementation of our obligations under the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*.

Monsieur le Président et membres distingués du Comité, le Canada est fier de pouvoir participer aujourd'hui aux discussions sur la mise en œuvre de nos engagements envers la *Convention internationale sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination raciale*.

I am Diane Fulford, Assistant Deputy Minister for Citizenship and Heritage in the Department of Canadian Heritage. Our delegation today is comprised of representatives from various federal government departments, including: Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Justice, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Citizenship and Immigration, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and Human Resources and Social Development.

We are also pleased to have representatives from the provinces of Québec, Ontario, and British Columbia. While not all provinces and territories could be here today, you can be assured that we are continuing to collaborate closely with them in the implementation of this Convention.

Pour commencer, je désirerais féliciter le Comité du rôle clé qu'il joue dans la campagne mondiale de lutte contre le racisme dans toutes ses formes. Le Comité a joué un rôle déterminant en mettant l'accent sur la mise en œuvre de cet important instrument international en matière de droits de la personne et en permettant la mise en commun des pratiques exemplaires en matière d'élimination de la discrimination raciale. Le Canada apprécie grandement vos efforts continus.

Il nous fera plaisir de discuter du Dix-septième/Dix-huitième rapport du Canada, qui couvre la période débutant en juin 2001 et se terminant en mai 2005. Nous sommes convaincus que les discussions d'aujourd'hui seront inspirantes pour tous.

Au cours de notre présentation, en plus d'exposer quelques-uns des efforts décrits dans notre rapport, nous aimerions fournir des informations au Comité concernant les mesures prises dans nos efforts de lutte contre la discrimination raciale au Canada depuis la période documentée dans notre rapport.

*A diverse society:*

As is well known by this Committee, our country has one of the world's most multicultural and pluralistic societies, with residents now claiming more than 200 ethnic origins.

As our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, said recently:

“Pluralism is essential to our civil society and economic strength. It evolved out of our foundational values: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Generations of immigrants from all over the world have found peace and prosperity here. They have found equality of opportunity, appreciation for differences, and openness to change.”

Canada is a country marked and enriched by the many different backgrounds of its population.

And, the process of demographic change in our country is likely to accelerate in the years ahead.

In 2005, using data from the 1996 and 2001 censuses, demographic projections were developed to get a sense of the future make-up of our society in 2017, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada's Confederation.

The results were very revealing.

By 2017 one Canadian in five would be of non-Caucasian, non-Aboriginal background.

Given this fact, it is particularly important for Canada to continue to take active measures to build a society where racial discrimination is not tolerated.

Canada continues its efforts to remain an international model of how different peoples and cultures can live together in an atmosphere of harmony and respect. We firmly believe in the principle that all citizens, regardless of their racial, ethnic or religious background, must have an equal voice in the affairs of their nation, and an equal right to participate fully in all facets of society.

As indicated in our last appearance before you, our society is built on a robust legal framework that advances the principles of respect and equality of opportunity for all. Although Canada is not immune from acts of racial discrimination, policies and recourses are in place to address these issues and we are continually looking for ways to enhance and complement our efforts to combat racism.

***New Measures since the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> report:***

I am pleased to inform you that, in the past year, Canada has acted decisively on a number of issues of particular interest to this Committee.

For example, funds have been set aside for the creation of a new agency that will offer services to expedite foreign credential assessment and

recognition, in an effort to address employment barriers faced by many immigrants. Further, an additional \$307 million has been provided to help support immigration settlement services and supports.

The Right of Permanent Residence Fee was also cut in half to lessen the financial burden of new immigrants when they're starting a new life in Canada.

Further, a formal apology was offered to the Chinese Canadian community for the Head Tax of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A new recognition program is being created to highlight the contributions of communities that may have been adversely affected by immigration and war time measures of the past.

### ***Aboriginal Issues:***

Aboriginal health status has been improving in Canada. For example, the gap in life expectancy between First Nations and non-Aboriginal Canadians has narrowed considerably since 1980 and the gap in infant mortality rate, which fell by 60% between 1979 and 1993, has continued to close since.

However, despite efforts, many Aboriginal communities face particular challenges in terms of poverty, health and education, and Aboriginal health status is still below that of other Canadians.

In a nation as prosperous and as progressive as ours, this situation is unacceptable. In response, Canada is taking concrete action on issues of particular concern to Aboriginal peoples.

In March 2006, the government implemented the Protocol for Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Communities. These new standards will help ensure that clean drinking water is available in First Nation communities.

As will be outlined in our responses to the advance questions put to us by this Committee's Rapporteur, we are making other special efforts to address the health issues of Aboriginal peoples.

Further, in May 2006, the Government of Canada approved a Settlement Agreement regarding the Indian Residential Schools to foster reconciliation and healing among all Canadians. This Agreement will broaden access to both compensation and mental health supports to all former students of Indian residential schools.

Working in partnership with First Nations leaders, Canada is also making progress on the question of matrimonial property rights on reserves. This year, a Ministerial Representative was appointed to work with the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations in developing a plan for consultations.

This nation-wide consultation is the first of a series of measures to protect the rights and to ensure the well-being of women, children and families living on-reserve.

Pour lutter contre la violence dont les femmes autochtones sont victimes, le Canada continue de soutenir l'initiative Sœurs d'esprit de l'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada. Cette initiative vise à déterminer le nombre exact de femmes autochtones victimes de violence; quelles en sont les causes profondes et quels sont les programmes et services qui pourraient faire l'objet d'améliorations afin de tenir compte et d'éliminer la violence fondée sur la race et le sexe.

En mars 2006, les ministres responsables de la Condition féminine au sein des gouvernements fédéral, provinciaux et territoriaux ont tenu un Forum sur la politique concernant les femmes autochtones et la violence, intitulé Bâtir des familles et des collectivités en sécurité et en santé.

Le Forum a regroupé des fonctionnaires des gouvernements, des femmes Inuites, Métisses et des Premières nations, afin de présenter les pratiques exemplaires et de discuter des lacunes dans les programmes et les services et afin d'envisager des solutions susceptibles d'apporter des changements.

Un autre élément important est la décision du Canada d'abroger l'article 67 de la *Loi canadienne sur les droits de la personne*, article qui avait pour conséquence d'exempter les dispositions de la *Loi sur les Indiens* et les décisions prises en vertu de cette Loi de la protection de la *Loi canadienne sur les droits de la personne*.

Ce sujet sera également abordé plus en détails dans nos réponses aux questions préliminaires.

### ***Action Plans against Racism:***

Returning to Canada's Seventeenth/Eighteenth report, it is important for us to highlight Canada's Action Plan Against Racism and a number of provincial and territorial strategies for fighting racism.

*A Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan against Racism* is one of the newest pillars supporting efforts to eliminate racial discrimination. This coordinated approach, which brings together some 20 different departments within the federal government, is noted in our report and a full copy has been provided to you.

Delivering on Canada's commitment to consult annually with stakeholders on progress, meetings were held across the country. Overall, the Action Plan has been well received during these meetings and stakeholders are very interested in seeing the work continue and expand.

New initiatives have been put in place to respond to gaps in the following areas: workplace discrimination; youth integration; race-based issues in the justice system; hate crimes; law enforcement and broadening access to government programs and services.

Some of these initiatives will be addressed this afternoon in our responses to the Rapporteur's written questions, so for now I will note that the Action Plan is nearing completion of its second year. Some recent highlights of its implementation include the release of the first year of hate crime data for the cities of London and Ottawa; and the active engagement of regional staff on the Racism-Free Workplace Strategy.

### ***Provincial-territorial initiatives***

(Madame la Présidente ou Monsieur le Président), j'aimerais rappeler l'important rôle que jouent les gouvernements provinciaux et des territoires dans la lutte contre la discrimination. Je citerai ici quelques-unes des initiatives qui ont été mises en œuvre :

Pour répondre aux besoins spéciaux des enfants autochtones et de leurs familles, le Manitoba a restructuré en 2003 son système de protection de l'enfance. La loi manitobaine crée trois régions autochtones de service à l'enfance et à la famille, pour permettre aux communautés métisses et des Premières nations de développer et d'assurer la prestation de services de protection de l'enfance et d'adoption culturellement adéquats.

Au Québec, en vue d'élaborer une politique de lutte contre le racisme et la discrimination raciale, une Commission parlementaire a permis d'entendre près d'une centaine d'organismes sur les questions liées au racisme et à la discrimination au cours de l'automne 2006. Cette Commission parlementaire s'inscrit dans la logique des actions entreprises par le gouvernement du Québec au cours des dernières

années en vue de faciliter l'intégration et la pleine participation des citoyens de toutes origines à la société.

Au cours du printemps prochain, le Québec se dotera donc d'une politique gouvernementale de lutte contre le racisme et la discrimination raciale ainsi que d'un plan d'action.

Ontario has created a Hate Crimes Community Working Group mandated to advise the government on strategies for reducing the incidence of hate crimes and to better address the needs of victims of hate. The Working Group submitted a report in December 2006. In response, the Ontario government has established an 18-month project to develop a comprehensive hate crimes reduction strategy building on the recommendations contained in the report.

In Alberta, the *Help Make a Difference* initiative encourages Albertans to contribute to building a fair and respectful society through their own actions. Public service announcements were produced, focused on the themes of cultural diversity, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and women.

In February of each year in New Brunswick, heritage groups, communities, schools, access centres and libraries host special activities to recognize the province's diverse heritage. The theme for 2007 – Our Rights, Our Freedoms, Our Heritage – will give everyone an opportunity to reflect on the values of citizenship and human rights.

British Columbia has a Strategic Framework for Action, which encourages joint action on multiculturalism and the elimination of racism. This strategy involves the participation of the private sector, municipalities, non-government organizations, media, education, and the provincial government. As well, British Columbia is forging a New Relationship with Aboriginal people founded on respect, recognition and reconciliation of Aboriginal Rights and Title.

And, Nunavut, the new territory officially inaugurated in 1999, passed its first Human Rights Act in 2003, which prohibits racial discrimination.

The examples I have just given represent only a small sample of the work being done by Canada's provincial and territorial governments to fight racial discrimination in our country.

***Partners:***

Governments cannot combat racism alone. We would like to take a moment to acknowledge the efforts of our partners in contributing to the elimination of racism. For example,

- We are honoured that the Aga Khan has chosen Ottawa, our country's capital, to establish its Global Centre for Pluralism and we are proud to bring our contribution to this initiative.
- The Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination, an initiative led by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, has been established. To date, nine municipalities, including Montréal, Toronto and Calgary, have joined the Coalition. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Union of Municipalities of Quebec have also indicated their support.
- We wish to recognize, as well, the efforts of the many Canadian non-governmental organizations who work to increase public awareness, understanding and informed public dialogue about multiculturalism, racism and cultural diversity in Canada. In fact, we met with a number of organizations prior to this appearance and I see representatives of several NGOs are here today. We applaud their continuing efforts.

- Finally, among examples of government initiatives to engage civil society and ethno-cultural communities, I would like to mention the ongoing Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security, which provides a forum to discuss emerging trends and developments, provides insight on how national security measures impact Canada's diverse communities, and promotes the protection of civil order, mutual respect and common understanding.

L'ensemble de toutes les initiatives dont j'ai parlé aujourd'hui, et les autres initiatives présentées plus en détails dans les plus récents rapports du Canada, témoignent de notre engagement inébranlable en matière de lutte contre la discrimination raciale.

La population canadienne est consciente de l'ampleur du défi. Nous sommes déterminés à le relever, peu importe le temps nécessaire pour y arriver.

Madame la Présidente ou Monsieur le Président, chers membres du Comité, ceci met fin à mes observations préliminaires. Au nom du gouvernement du Canada, je tiens à vous remercier de l'occasion de paraître devant vous aujourd'hui.

We would now be happy to provide you with responses to the list of 32 advance questions received from the Country Rapporteur. We will try to be as concise, yet comprehensive, as we can.

I will call upon various members of the delegation to address the issues as appropriate to their areas of expertise.