

**Tolerance Implementation Meeting on Promoting Inter-Cultural, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Understanding
Almaty, 12-13 June 2006**

**CANADIAN DELEGATION STATEMENT
Head of Delegation: Ambassador Barbara Gibson**

Session III: national, regional and international initiatives to promote inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and civil society partnerships

I am pleased to speak this morning on the role of national initiatives to promote inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic understanding and dialogue.

Canada has long believed that national governments have an important role to play in the development of tools and information that promote respect and cross-cultural understanding. Overcoming the evils of racism, xenophobia, and discrimination requires vibrant and diverse partnerships with civil society, engaging every segment of the population. We also believe in the necessity of public education to promote mutual respect and understanding.

Canada is steadfast in its efforts at the national level to foster an inclusive society built on inter-cultural understanding and citizen participation.

Please allow me to share details of our efforts back at home. I would like to draw your attention in particular to Canada's Multiculturalism Policy. This policy was designed to create a climate in which the multicultural heritage of all Canadians is valued. It supports a society where all Canadians actively participate in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country.

We are building on the foundations of this Multiculturalism Policy with four primary, complementary, priorities for action: i) cross-cultural understanding; ii) civic participation iii) combating racism and discrimination; iv) and developing institutions that reflect our diversity.

Our Multiculturalism Program supports programs and initiatives that facilitate an understanding of cultural differences. I refer you to our public education initiatives such as Black History Month and Asian Heritage Month.

By supporting numerous national and regional community-based projects across the country, the Multiculturalism Program also fosters cross-cultural understanding. An important example of such projects is a national initiative to address culturally competent policing and law enforcement in a diverse society.

Another important aspect of Canada's efforts lies in its immigration and integration policies which are also based on the importance of building social capital and promoting inclusion. These policies work to foster and nurture a "global village" approach to Canada's diverse culture that mirrors the values of a pluralistic society.

We recognize that integration involves more than helping a newcomer find a job and a place to live. It encompasses helping newcomers fully understand their rights and responsibilities while providing them an important sense of belonging.

To accomplish this, we have programs and policies that foster multi-tiered partnerships among all levels of government. These work in close cooperation with the private and voluntary sectors in order to be effective in integrating newcomers to Canada.

What is more, Canada acknowledges and willingly accepts that integration is a process of mutual adjustment. It is a two-way process, as both parties – newcomers and Canadian society – build new and diverse communities. We have long believed that effective immigrant integration enriches us all and our policies reflect this.

Internationally, Canada will continue to honour its commitments within various international forums, including the OSCE. We encourage all participating States to honour these commitments as well, as they demonstrate concrete ways in which we can combat intolerance and discrimination.

Enhancing inter-cultural and inter-faith understanding requires persistence diligence and above all a desire for mutual respect and understanding. Canada believes this desire is shared by us all and we are pleased to be able to share our experiences here today.