

## **Some thoughts on multiculturalism: February 20, 2007 Developed for the Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC)**

- 1) The most important impact of the multiculturalism policy was gaining a sense of Pride from the fact that Canada is a multicultural country .Canada is one of the few countries in the world respecting each other's culture and contribution to the development and growth of Canada as a whole. We are talking about Canadian culture and identity as a composition of diverse elements, not as a blend but as an expression of rich and dynamic variety. It increased our awareness of **pluralism, democracy and equality** as well as deepened a sense of **cross-cultural understanding** and appreciation of input of various **sharing is needed to build a cohesive united Canada**

We cannot live in a **peaceful society** if tensions will build up- as a result there will be more alienation and misunderstanding. Many ethnic groups feel that their voices are not always well understood. Their alienation and isolation leads to growing crime rate and drugs- become a social problem.

By building partnerships, learning about each other, we can diminish these tensions, increase a sense of well being and pride and decrease stereotyping and prejudice which create barriers in communication. **It is only through a dialogue and listening to each other we can build a peaceful equal society.**

Canada may be proud of its multicultural tradition. **Owing to the policy of multiculturalism Government can influence and lead this healthy process of mutual understanding** and cooperation through concrete meaningful actions, through meaningful community projects – and not through lip service or use of slogans. We need to go beyond the surface and explore the true potential of each other so that communities can coexist and share in order to contribute to the whole.

- 2) Success can be measured by concrete outcomes
  - o visible activities involving various communities
  - o stronger sense of cross cultural understanding and social interaction
  - o planned process of change and of social development
  - o stronger networking, dialogue- through debates, conferences, exhibits, publications, TV programs , cultural activities etc.
  - o effective strategic planning to lead for change
  - o coordination of contacts between Government and community through
  - o existing organizational networks
  - o more alliance building between groups and a stronger sense of belonging to Canada( composed of all diverse ethnic groups)
- 3) **Multiculturalism is more than a policy. It is a reality, good social sense and a strategic vision for the future.**

**After** all we live in a global village and Canada reflects this diversity and builds a model of peaceful coexistence which sets an example for the whole world. Our diverse population is the strength. With the increase of anxiety and fear- after September 11 - we live in a different world where a dialogue and compromise are necessary.

Canada is and should continue to be **a leader** in this area.

Multiculturalism is not about building walls but about opening doors to others, sharing and collaborating to diminish isolation and fear based on lack of knowledge. Only through learning about our cultural roots, the world history, about variety of beliefs and cultures, we can increase our ability to reach meaningful and constructive solutions and thus strengthen the human link. Prejudice is a result of ignorance, lack of knowledge and inability to understand

that everybody is different. It is that pluralism that makes our life so exciting in Canada and builds our culture.

- 4) What kind of **research** is needed:
  - more information about history and variety of traditions and cultures (exploration)
  - learning about existing achievements of multiculturalism, positive outcomes of various projects and studies already done ( historical reseach)
  - Consulting the ethnocultural organizations which have existed in Canada for a long time. Develop strategic analysis based on the available material
  - We do not need to start from a scratch each time the Government changes- continue **building on what has already been achieved.**
  - undertake new, future-oriented research projects which take into consideration dynamic social changes in our environment-: growing concerns about the war, the security issues, growing tensions between groups that certainly will lead to hostility
  
- 5) Multicultural Policy is needed to develop a framework; to enable communities to strengthen their sense of Canadian identity based on diversity. Our communities should be proud of the **Canadian model of multiculturalism** which has been obviously working. Multicultural policies allowed us to build stronger strategic plans and to focus our attention on what was important to all of use – what keeps us together- not what divides us. But we need to continue this work to get results in the future. Government helps us to get a sense of direction- enables us to plan, Develop long-term capacity, and develop stronger ties between various communities.
  
- 6) Governments need to integrate multiculturalism in various aspects of its operation: health, education, social services, immigration, culture and arts. It is relevant to each of these areas.
  - The problem is that one Government would develop such policies and then the next Government drops them and destroys a sense of continuity. We cannot work like that – it is not constructive. There is a lot of waste of time and resources. Those who have been involved in multiculturalism since times of Trudeau- like myself- feel that sometimes our work is moving in circles- we waste time on rediscovering what we knew before. The problem is that every new Government starts researching issues and scrapping previous programs instead of moving forward to build on the accomplishments.
  - Financial support is essential at this point for organizations such as Canadian Ethnocultural Council which has already built its recognition, tradition and is known in many communities. It is important to support projects which are based on a realistic assessment of current social needs and which lead into the future. Do not support one group vs. another. Support community activities which involve several groups and develop a sense of common belonging.
  - Appeal to youth, women and minority groups so they can participate fully and constructively in creation of a stronger, united and vibrant Canada based on the principles of respect, understanding and mutual peaceful coexistence.

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