



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-02108**

BY: **MR. ERSKINE-SMITH (BEACHES-EAST YORK)**

DATE: **FEBRUARY 28, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SEAN CASEY**

Response by the Minister of Canadian Heritage

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

National day

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada would like to thank the petitioners for their request that the House of Commons declare August 1st as Emancipation Day across Canada.

The Government of Canada recognizes and respects the diversity of Canadians in regards to race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as fundamental characteristics of Canadian society in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. The Government is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance Canada's multicultural heritage while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians.

Furthermore, subsection 3(c) of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, promotes "[...] the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society [...]"

In December 1995, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine. The motion was carried unanimously by the House of Commons.

Since February 1996, the Government of Canada's Black History Month campaign has highlighted the "important contribution of Black Canadians to the settlement, growth and development of Canada, the diversity of the Black community in Canada and its importance to the history of this country."

The Government of Canada's public education and promotional activities related to Canadians of African descent is not limited to Black History Month. In 2017, in the context of the 150th anniversary of Confederation and Emancipation Day Celebrations, the Department of Canadian Heritage worked with the Black Canadian Network to support the Network's hosting of the Department's traveling exhibit on Black Canadian history "On the Road North." The Government continues to explore opportunities to engage with Canadians to better understand the Black Canadian experience.

On January 30, 2018, the Government of Canada officially recognized the International Decade for People of African Descent. Through this recognition, the Government furthered its commitment to a better future for Black Canadians, and to improving research and data collection, so we can better understand the particular challenges Black Canadians face.

The Government of Canada's support for the objectives of the International Decade for People of African Descent is well aligned with our ongoing commitment to multiculturalism. In fact, Budget 2018 committed \$23 million in funding to increase the capacity of the Multiculturalism Program and \$19 million to address the specific and unique challenges faced by Black Canadians.