

**Notes for Remarks by**

**The Hon. Diane Finley  
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development**

**At an opening plenary of  
The World Urban Forum 3**

**June 19, 2006  
Vancouver, B.C.**

**Check against delivery**

## Welcome

Civic leaders, distinguished speakers, ladies and gentlemen. As co-chair of this third World Urban Forum, and on behalf of the Government of Canada, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this splendid city of Vancouver.

*Bienvenue dans la magnifique ville de Vancouver! Je vous assure que c'est un grand honneur pour le Canada que de s'associer à l'ONU-HABITAT pour accueillir cet important rassemblement.*

As you may know, Vancouver was the site of the first UN Conference on Human Settlements. Thirty years later, it is appropriate that we return here to assess our progress and to address new challenges.

## **The challenge**

Over the past 30 years, Canada was successful in responding to the challenges of globalization. As a result, our cities, big and small, are recognized worldwide as some of the best in which to live, work and invest. In other countries, for various reasons, the challenges are more daunting.

## **Addressing the challenge**

Against this backdrop, the World Urban Forum affords all of us a unique opportunity. By bringing together mayors and local authorities, city planners, architects, private sector organizations, NGOs, governments and citizens from more than 100 nations, the World Urban Forum serves as a medium for global exchanges on an unprecedented scale.

In more than 160 networking sessions, approximately 8,000 of us this week will focus on pragmatic and innovative ideas to exchange best practices and learn what works.

And the discussion is by no means restricted to those who have made the trek to Vancouver. A special online forum, called Habitat Jam, allowed more than 39,000 representatives of youth, women's groups, business, government, academic leaders and citizens of impoverished communities to offer their views.

### **Canada's contribution**

And what is Canada bringing to the table?

Ours is the second-biggest land mass on the planet. Yet, fewer people live here<sup>1</sup> than in the greater Tokyo metropolitan area<sup>2</sup>.

But while our population is relatively small, Canada is a highly urbanized nation. Four in every five Canadians are concentrated in cities – principally Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Ottawa.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently 32,536,300 (Stats Can "population clock")

<sup>2</sup> 35,327,000 in 2005 (Information Please® Database, © 2006 Pearson Education, Inc.)

And those cities are feeling the pressure: The population of Vancouver, for example, is expected to double over the next 50 years.

Most Canadians are well aware of the pivotal role that cities play in our country's success. Our 10 biggest urban centres, for instance, generate half of Canada's gross domestic product.

Maintaining our big cities' role as the engine of growth and keeping them a place where Canadians enjoy living requires that Canada's government focus on key priorities. Among them are:

- Providing them with stable and predictable funding
- Reinvesting in urban infrastructure
- Ensuring air and water quality
- Tackling crime, and
- Improving access to affordable housing.

I encourage you to visit the Canada Pavilion where you can learn more about the Government of Canada's contributions to making this world a better place to live.

Of course, we look forward to learning from you as well. Because, in the end, WUF3 is a genuine *forum*, a place for the unfettered exchange of ideas.

As host of the World Urban Forum, Canada's goal is to make this meeting practical and action-oriented. We want to help you forge meaningful networks and partnerships. To pick up workable concepts. And to come away infused with the energy and enthusiasm to turn good ideas into great actions.

After all, the well-being of our global village starts right at your doorstep.

*J'espère sincèrement que vous repartirez tous de ce forum pleins d'énergie et d'enthousiasme pour mettre en application*

*de nouvelles idées et solutions pratiques dans vos villes et vos collectivités.*

*Je souhaite à tous et à toutes un Forum urbain mondial productif et couronné de succès.*

I wish you all a successful and productive World Urban Forum.  
Thank you.

Now, I would like to move to Agenda item 1 of this first Plenary Session of the Third World Urban Forum, adoption of the Provisional Agenda, as listed in document HSP/WUF/3/1, entitled Provisional Agenda. I therefore propose that the Forum move to adopt the Provisional Agenda.

As I hear no objection, the Provisional Agenda is adopted.

I would like to pass to Agenda item 2 of the Agenda, Establishment of an advisory group for the Third Session of the World Urban Forum, and would like to inform the Forum, on

behalf of the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, that the members of the Advisory Group for this Third Session of the Forum are contained in document HSP/WUF/3/Inf.8. The terms of reference of the Advisory Group are to advise and assist the Executive Director with the organization, management and conduct of this session.

I would now like to draw the attention of the Forum to Agenda item 3 of the Agenda, Organization of Work, and I would like to propose to the Forum that it adopt its organization of work as prepared by the Executive Director and contained in document HSP/WUF/3/Add.1, entitled, “ Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work”, which contains the arrangements for the six dialogues, and document HSP/WUF/3/Info.1 and Inf.2, which contain, respectively, the Programme of the Third World Urban Forum and the programme for the Networking and Training Events.

As I see no objection, the organization of work is adopted.