

## Message from Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney



"February—Black History Month—gives us an annual opportunity to remember and appreciate the struggle and the achievements of the black Canadian community in Canada's history.

"The 2009 theme, *Building Canadian Identity*, focuses on three elements: the contribution of the No. 2 Construction Battalion of Pictou, Nova Scotia, during the First World War; the recognition of black Canadian Olympians a year before the winter games in Vancouver; and the preservation of the historical contributions of black Canadians to the building of Canada.

"The desire and determination of a group of black Canadian men to serve their country during the First World War led the government of Canada to create the No. 2 Construction Battalion in 1916. While based in Nova Scotia, the members of this battalion, more than 600 at its peak, came from across Canada. The Battalion spent the war building roads, railways, bridges and defences, sometimes on terrain with unexploded ordnance or in areas close to the front line. Many were injured and some lost their lives doing this necessary work. In a short time, they distinguished themselves and were recommended for transfer to the Western Front.

"In many sports at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and in other major international competitions, black Canadian men and women have inspired and excited us with their athletic performances, and have represented Canada honourably on the world sporting stage.

"These are part of Canadian history, the record and memory of which must be preserved. There are many museums across Canada that celebrate and preserve black history, but we must ensure that younger Canadians continue the work of these institutions. As part of 2009 Black History Month, the government is undertaking a succession planning day in Ottawa for Canadian museums of black history, to promote an intergenerational community of practice for the preservation of the important contributions of black Canadians to Canadian identity.

"As Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, I encourage all Canadians to participate in events and celebrations of this part of our history all across Canada during Black History Month."

The Honourable Jason Kenney, PC, MP