INTERVIEW WITH THE HONOURABLE STAN HAGEN

Minister of Tourism, Sports and the Arts

1) How important is it for the people of Canada to have knowledge of the country's history?

It is very important. A country's identity is shaped by its history, and without its formal memory a country's sense of itself can start to drift.

That's one of the reasons B.C. is so proud that Vancouver is hosting this year's National History Conference in October. By learning from our past, we are better able to shape future actions and decisions.

2) What are the most important reasons for people possessing knowledge of history?

With increasing globalization and high-speed communication systems, understanding the history of our nation, its traditions and values becomes extremely important in identifying who we are and what we stand for as a country. Without this knowledge and awareness, we can quickly lose those unique qualities that make us a great nation.

3) What are the biggest obstacles to improving knowledge of the country's history?

Unfortunately some Canadians are not interested in history. This is partly because history is too often portrayed as a series of unrelated events, dates and quaint stories. History needs to be made more relevant by relating the daily issues and concerns of a diverse population to the memories, traditions and values of Canada, not the other way around.

In 2008, our province will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Crown Colony of British Columbia. This milestone celebration is a great opportunity to showcase and reflect on our provincial history, as we continue to do the exciting work of shaping the future.

4) How can your Ministry effectively contribute to improving knowledge of Canada's history?

By supporting local, provincial and national heritage initiatives, my ministry is inviting British Columbians to participate in – and appreciate – our collective heritage. By engaging people at the grassroots level and onwards, we're helping to build momentum for heritage conservation in our own province, and across Canada.

5) In the job market, what are the advantages of knowing the country's history?

Canada is one of the best countries in the world to live and that didn't happen by accident. Throughout our country's history many different people, from all walks of life, have made decisions that led us to where we are today, including many decisions within the employment market. Eliminating discrimination and unfair hiring practices, for example, is an obvious one. By understanding Canada's history and values, Canada can be an even better place to live and work.

6) What do you think are the most important events that have marked the country's history?

The arrival of our First People and the rich cultural diversity we find in Canada now; the founding of our nation not by war, but through a negotiated agreement by English and French Canadians; the building of the CPR linking the country with a single transportation route; the settlement of Western Canada where the North-west Mounted Police brought law and order before the settlers arrived; two World Wars where Canada was prepared to defend its values globally and matured as a nation; a made-in-Canada Canadian Constitution; and of course let's not forget the '72 Russia/Canada Hockey Series.

7) Is there an event in Canada's history that personally influenced your vision of the country?

I well remember our 1967 Centennial celebrations, which I believe helped bring us closer together as a nation.