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# News Release    Communiqué

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CP2010-00205

## **Government of Canada Announces the Historical Significance of the Refugees of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution**

*First large immigration wave from the Eastern Bloc is recognized*

**Ottawa, Ontario, July 26, 2010** –The Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, today announced the designation of the Refugees of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution as a national historic event. This designation reflects the importance of this event for our national history and for the way in which it helped to change Canadian immigration policies.

“The arrival of thousands of Hungarian refugees helped to shape Canada’s model for the reception of refugees and helped Canadians adopt a more receptive attitude towards immigrants,” said Minister Prentice. “This event of national historic significance opened doors for other refugees wanting to live in Canada.”

With the support of its population, Canada admitted, as immigrants, more than 37,500 Hungarian refugees during the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary – the largest group any country received in proportion to its population. Never before had Canada ensured the selection, transport, and establishment of so many refugees in such a short period of time.

The Hungarian refugees themselves, generally young and highly qualified when they arrived, contributed significantly to Canadian society, particularly to its cultural diversity and to the national economy by contributing their skills to the country’s workforce.

“We are delighted that the Government of Canada has approved this designation, thus recognizing the generosity of Canadians towards the 1956 refugees and the important role this played in the subsequent opening up and shaping of our refugee and immigration policies,” said Ms. Judy Young Drache of the Canada-Hungary Educational Foundation. “This has in turn contributed significantly to the creation of an open, tolerant, and culturally diverse society, which remains a source of pride to us all.”

Created in 1919, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada advises the Minister of the Environment regarding the national historic significance of places, people and events that have marked Canada’s history. Parks Canada manages a nation-wide network of national historic sites that make up the rich tapestry of Canada’s cultural heritage and which offers visitors the opportunity for real and inspiring discoveries.

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