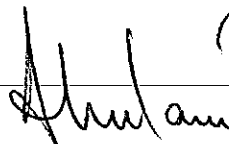


The proclamation by the Province of Ontario of June as Italian Heritage Month honours the contribution of the Italian immigrants who first settled throughout the vast province, their lives and achievements, and those of their descendants, who now number more than one million. Italian Canadians are present in every aspect of Ontario society: culture, commerce, civic service, political leadership, healthcare, education, to name just a few. They are committed parents, neighbours, friends, and co-workers, who generously and proudly share the gifts of their heritage. Italian Canadians have risen to the pinnacle of their professions in numerous fields, to the benefit of their communities, their society, and their country. By heeding the lessons of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents who preceded them here, they continue to contribute the work ethic and family values, the creativity and invention that are hallmarks of our culture.

For this first year of the celebration of Italian Heritage Month, it is fitting that 2011 also marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Unification of Italy, a year for Italians around the world to reflect on their shared history and heritage, wherever they may be. For Italian Canadians in Ontario, that is a place of resource and opportunity, where they and their families have made their homes, and where they continue to flourish.

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Andrea Meloni