

Canadian Delegation to General Assembly

The Canadian Delegation to the General Assembly has always been led by a member of the Government, usually the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and frequently has included other Cabinet Ministers. The other Representatives and Alternate Representatives are chosen from the ranks of Senators, Members of the House of Commons, distinguished Canadians from public and academic life and officials of the Department of External Affairs, including the Permanent Representative in New York. These Representatives and Alternates act as Canadian spokesmen in the General Assembly and in its seven committees. In addition, Parliamentary Observers drawn from the Government party and from the main Opposition parties usually attend. They have no special duties but are given an opportunity to acquire experience in international conference procedures and familiarity with the issues before the Assembly. Members of the Delegation are assisted by advisers drawn from the Permanent Mission in New York and from the Department in Ottawa. Similarly, stenographic and administrative help are provided by both the Permanent Mission and the Department.

The Permanent Mission

Canada maintains a full-time Permanent Mission at United Nations Headquarters in New-York, with a Permanent Representative holding the rank of Ambassador, supported by an official and administrative staff. Throughout the year the Permanent Mission reports on and participates in the work of the many and various subordinate United Nations bodies, including committees, commissions and agencies of the General Assembly, and functional commissions of ECOSOC. When Canada has been on the Economic and Social Council the Mission has, of course, had the responsibility for Canadian interests there also. The Permanent Representative represents Canada on the Security Council. (Canada is a member for 1958-1959.) Thus the New York office has general negotiating and reporting duties on subjects liable to come before the General Assembly.

Instructions for Delegation

Even before the provisional agenda of a session is circulated in mid-July, a beginning is made in outlining Canadian policy on the prospective items. Consultations take place between the Department of External Affairs and other Government Departments in Ottawa which may have an interest in the items which are expected to be discussed.

While these discussions are being carried forward, detailed guidance for the Canadian Delegation to the General Assembly is drawn up on every item of the agenda. The guidance includes a description of how the item has fared in the past (if it has arisen in the General Assembly before), an outline of past Canadian policy on the subject and an account of any new factors that have arisen which would influence the Canadian position during the forthcoming session. Some attempt is made to envisage how the item will be handled, and guidance is given to enable the Canadian Delegation to vote in accord with