

1978 COMMONWEALTH GAMES

The Commonwealth Games, which are to be held in Edmonton in 1978, are governed by the Commonwealth Games Federation of London, England, a wholly private, non-governmental body made up of the Commonwealth Games Associations of all member countries. The 1978 Commonwealth Games are administered by the Commonwealth Games Foundation, set up by the Canadian Commonwealth Games Association especially for that purpose. Any territorial unit of the Commonwealth (not necessarily a self-governing or sovereign unit) may have a Commonwealth Games Association and thus an inalienable right to participate in every Commonwealth Games.

As a result of the presence in South Africa of a New Zealand rugby team, at the time of the Soweto riots of 1976, and also because a New Zealand government policy of non-interference in the activities of New Zealand sportsmen precluded taking steps to discourage sport contacts with South Africa, the African nations withdrew from the Olympic Games because New Zealand participated in them. It then became apparent that the African Commonwealth nations would also boycott the 1978 Commonwealth Games if New Zealand attended and did not reverse her policy; this intention was confirmed by a resolution of the Organization of African Unity at Lomé in February 1977.

The Government of Canada is naturally concerned over the possibility of a boycott, not only because it threatens the success of the Commonwealth Games but also because the issue could disrupt the harmony of the Commonwealth. We have made our concerns very clear to all governments involved since the issue arose following the 1976 Olympics but it is clear the matter lies between the Africans and New Zealand to resolve. The Government of Canada will continue to assist in any way possible although it is recognized we do not have a decisive role to play in settling the matter. All parties in the issue agree that they are opposed to the practice and principle of apartheid in sport as in all other aspects of society. We hope, therefore, that on the basis of this fundamental agreement an understanding on this issue can be reached.