

Summitry Crowns Canada's International Year

The choreography of planning, preparation and policy development is virtually finished. Soon the summitry begins, with global leaders holding full dance cards—and the world watching.

For Canada and for DFAIT, 2010 has been a time of broad engagement—and it reaches its zenith later this month when world leaders arrive here for the G-8 and G-20 summits. No nation has ever held both summits in the same year, yet Canada is hosting both on the same weekend—the G-8 in Muskoka from June 25 to 26 and the G-20 in Toronto from June 26 to 27.

“It’s a year for summits for Canada,” says Len Edwards, Sherpa for both the G-8 and G-20 summits and recently retired Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Indeed, this year Canada also hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the Arctic Ocean Foreign Ministers’ Meeting and three ministerial meetings in advance of the G-8 Summit, he notes. “It’s a big year for Canada internationally.”

A HERCULEAN EFFORT

The effort involved in preparing for the G-8 and G-20 summits has been extraordinary. Edwards, a veteran of organizing summits, likens the exercise to a marathon. “You run and run with no thought of stopping, because that finish line is looming—and for us, that line is the opportunity to mobilize action on international priorities that affect us all.”

The Summits Management Office (SMO) has been responsible for logistics. Every table, chair and lighting scheme at the Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville, Ont., where the G-8 leaders will gather, and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, which will host the G-20, reflects a choice by an SMO staffer. Media centres have been set up to accommodate journalists sending summit news out to the world. Choices of menu, entertainment and scheduling have also received SMO scrutiny. The summit universe is vast, but the SMO’s eye has been everywhere.

The green of Muskoka reflects the affirmation of life behind Canada's signature maternal and child health initiative at the G-8.

photo: Muskoka Tourism



1944: Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference

A Multilateral Timeline

Summitry has played a major role in Canada's multilateral relations through the years. Some highlights:

1880 Sir Alexander Galt appointed Canada's first high commissioner, London

1887 Canada attends first Colonial Conference, London

1894 Trade Commissioner Service established; first trade commissioner posted, Australia

1909 Department of External Affairs established

1911 Canada attends first Imperial Conference, London

1919 Canada joins new League of Nations

1932 Prime Minister R.B. Bennett hosts Imperial Economic Conference, Ottawa

1944 Canada attends first Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, London

1945 Canada becomes founding member of UN

1948 Canada becomes founding member of GATT

1949 Canada becomes founding member of NATO