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COMMONWEALTH DAY

March 9 will be observed as Commonwealth Day in Canada and throughout the Commonwealth for the eleventh consecutive year. The Day was originated at Canada's suggestion as a way of focussing the attention of the public and especially of young people on the Commonwealth. Provincial Ministries of Education will distribute a Commonwealth Day Poster to schools in Canada.

A varied programme has been planned to mark the occasion in Ottawa. Flags of Commonwealth countries will fly on Confederation Square. There will be an interfaith service at 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 8 at Holy Cross Catholic Church on Walkley Road. On Monday, March 9, Parliament Hill will be the scene of events organized by the Federal Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and by the High Commissioners of the 26 Commonwealth countries represented in Canada. It is expected that there will also be special statements in the House of Commons on that day.

The Commonwealth today is an active and practical association of 49 member states encompassing most regions, races and religions of the world. Its purposes are consultation and cooperation - to provide both a bridge across the world's economic and political divisions and a pragmatic association for functional cooperation. Its activities include the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme, the Commonwealth Youth Programme and many other joint endeavours. The wide range of Commonwealth consultation and cooperation involves heads of government, government ministers, senior officials, technical experts, the universities and dozens of non-governmental organizations. Canadians are active at all these levels.

Membership in the Commonwealth has been a vital part of Canada's experience. The evolution of the Commonwealth and of Canada's role as an independent country with ties to all continents are closely related. The Commonwealth connection remains an essential part of Canada's international character and support for the association is an important element of Canadian foreign policy. This year Canada has special cause to recognize the significance of Commonwealth Day in that Canada will be host to the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Vancouver, October 13-17.