

Survey of Canada in Commonwealth Affairs

Canada believes in and supports the constructive role that the Commonwealth plays in world affairs and places particular value on its consultations as a means of broadening understanding and consensus in important international issues. The Commonwealth association also provides an opportunity to enrich and deepen our bilateral relations with member countries. Internationally, Canadian participation in the Commonwealth reinforces the thrust of Canadian foreign policy generally and provides Canada with the opportunity to reach its goals with the help and understanding of fellow members. For these reasons, membership in the association is an important aspect of Canada's international relations.

As Prime Minister Trudeau said at the 1973 meeting in Ottawa,

The Commonwealth is for many of us our window on the world... To contemporary observers and, I am confident, to future historians, the word Commonwealth will be irrevocably associated with the desire of free men and women representing more than a quarter of the world's population to gather, to discuss and to understand....

Canada's Role

Canada and Canadians have played a major role in Commonwealth affairs. The evolution of the Commonwealth was in large measure due to the Canadian example of achieving independent status while retaining the British connection. Canadian leaders have taken a keen interest in maintaining the informality, candor and breadth of Commonwealth Heads of Government discussions. Canadians work in senior positions at the Secretariat in London, and Canadian experts have participated in the preparation of virtually all the major Commonwealth special studies which have formed the basis of political and economic action in the Commonwealth. Canada has encouraged the established cooperation between the Commonwealth Secretariat and la Francophonie through the Agence de coopération culturelle & technique in Paris. Canadian