

The 70th anniversary of official diplomatic relations between Canada and Australia will be celebrated at the end of 2009. In September 1939, on the brink of World War II, the need for closer relations between members of the Commonwealth became a pressing issue. Canada and Australia quickly agreed to make diplomatic relations official early in the war through the appointment of High Commissioners. On September 11 1939, Canada announced the appointment of its first High Commissioner to Australia, and Australia reciprocated the next day.

By the end of the year both governments had announced their appointments and Charles Burchell became Canada's first High Commissioner to Australia, while Major-General the Honourable Sir William Glasgow, a former Australian Senator, was appointed as High Commissioner for Australia in Canada.

While our two countries lie on opposite sides of the globe, we share a similar past and have developed along remarkably parallel paths. For over a century, we have worked side by side, in war and peace, from the trenches of Passchendaele to the establishment of the United Nations, from the creation of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to peace-keeping in East Timor and re-building Afghanistan. With so much in common in international co-operation and defence, commerce and politics, education and culture, we come together naturally and enjoy close ties and an enduring friendship.



The bilateral relationship is marked by multiple channels and contacts at many levels. It includes co-operation in multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth, and wide-ranging dialogue and regular consultation between government officials and academics on issues as varied as tax policy, justice, health, defence, security and intelligence, research and innovation, ageing, public sector reform, federalism, e-government and immigration.

There are many examples of the concrete ties that link our countries. For example, two-way trade, investment and tourism remain strong, and our cultural, academic and student exchanges are flourishing. While we may be competitors in the marketplace, Canadian companies increasingly see Australia as the perfect springboard for doing business in Asia, just as Australian firms view Canada as the best gateway to the large North American market.

Every year thousands of young Canadians and Australians are discovering the delights of travelling and working in both countries, as a result of our highly successful working holiday programs which have been expanded to allow even more opportunities. Thanks to a unique consular sharing agreement, Australians and Canadians can seek assistance from each other's diplomatic missions in some 40 countries abroad.

Reflecting the close links between our countries, in 2007, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, made an official visit to Australia, following the APEC meeting held in Sydney