



Statements and Speeches

No. 80/4

✓ CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, to the Ontario Co-operative Program in Latin America and Caribbean Studies Conference on Health and Welfare Development, Windsor, Ontario, March 29, 1980

...This international seminar is devoted to the problems of health, welfare and development in Latin America and the Caribbean. By meeting in Canada to discuss these issues you are effectively underlining Canada's long-standing and growing interest in both areas; indeed, Canada will be giving increasing attention to Latin America and the Caribbean in the months and years ahead and I am delighted to be able to show my personal commitment by making one of my first official visits abroad to Mexico City next month.

Canada's role in health and development

Before coming to the main subject of my remarks today, Canada's relations with Latin America, I thought I would review briefly some of Canada's activities in the area of your special interest, health and development. Canada's concern for these problems has been demonstrated by our active membership in the Pan-American Health Organization, where we have now served three years on the Executive Committee. Our contributions to the PAHO include technical assistance in rural water and sanitation programs, dental health education, health worker training, and the development of food and drug standards.

The promotion of higher health standards has also been one of the objectives of the International Development Research Centre, the IDRC, in its programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Centre's projects stress applied research into health care with the involvement and strengthening of local research institutions. In Cali, Colombia, a project is studying the use of "health promoters" – non-specialist health workers who provide primary health care at the neighbourhood level. Elsewhere in Colombia an IDRC project is studying the utility of immunizations provided to undernourished people. In Paraguay, the IDRC has examined the possible role of rural schools in teaching the provision of basic health care. In Guyana, the IDRC is evaluating the role of trained medics in the delivery of basic health care.

The Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, has also been conducting health related programs in these regions. It is assisting the Andean Pact to build a pharmaceutical industry. In Trinidad, CIDA has provided technical assistance for a community mental health program. CIDA also endeavours to consider the long-term health implications of its assistance to the region. Thus a water-supply project in Belize contains provisions for ensuring that there will be local personnel capable of maintaining water purity levels. And an integrated rural development program in hospital-poor Haiti trains public health monitors in all aspects of preventive medicine. In general, Canada's health-related assistance programs attempt to attack fundamental problems, rather than merely applying "Band-Aids".
