

Commonwealth Caribbean

Canada's links with the Commonwealth Caribbean have existed for several hundred years, from the days when Canadian timber and salt fish were exchanged for Caribbean rum and sugar. It was natural that close relations should be formed with the islands of the region that, like Canada, had inherited British parliamentary traditions and the English language and had developed democratic forms of government within the British Empire and later in the context of free association within the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Caribbean is composed of six independent countries, five states "in association with the U.K.", and six British dependent territories. With the exception of the Bahamas, the representative of which is accredited from Washington, D.C., all the independent Commonwealth Caribbean states maintain high commissions in Ottawa and, in most cases, consular establishments in a number of major Canadian cities. Canada's representation in the region consists of high commissions in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica (also accredited to the Bahamas and Belize), Barbados (also accredited to Grenada, the West Indian Associated States and Montserrat), and Georgetown (with dual accreditation to Suriname). The Consul General in New York is accredited as Commissioner to Bermuda.

Commercial links between Canada and the Commonwealth Caribbean expanded during 1977. Canadian exports for the first ten months of the year increased from \$90 million to \$120 million. Imports from the region rose sharply to \$122 million, an increase of \$80 million over the figure for 1976, and were accounted for by increased Canadian purchases of Caribbean sugar and petroleum products. The largest increase in bilateral trade was between Canada and Trinidad and Tobago. Canadian investment in the region remained high, at \$350 to \$400 million, concentrated mostly in the alumina-bauxite industry, in banking, tourism and light manufacturing. Investment totals were down from the previous year as some governments, notably Trinidad and Tobago, purchased and localized foreign-owned operations.

The Commonwealth Caribbean remains a favourite region for vacationing Canadians, and a number of Canadians have established permanent residence there. Another aspect of the important personal ties that characterize relations between Canada and the region is the flow of immigrants and the growth of large and articulate Caribbean communities in many of Canada's larger cities. Jamaica and Guyana continue to rank in the top ten as immigrant source countries.

Government leaders from the Commonwealth Caribbean visit Canada quite frequently to meet with their Canadian counterparts; a number of such visits took place during 1977. Prime Minister Burnham of Guyana, accompanied by senior ministers, paid a state visit to Canada in October, during which discussions were held on Canada's bilateral development-assistance program, the "North-South Dialogue" and other regional and multilateral matters of mutual concern. The Prime Ministers of Jamaica and Grenada also visited Ottawa, as did the Premiers of Belize, Antigua and St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla. Canada welcomed attorneys-general to Winnipeg for the August meeting of the Commonwealth law ministers, and the annual Commonwealth finance ministers' meeting, which was held in Barbados, was attended by the newly-appointed Canadian Finance Minister, Jean Chrétien. Parliamentarians had an opportunity for exchange and discussion when the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association met in Ottawa in September. The tradition of Canadian naval visits to countries of the region was continued in 1977, when Canadian ships visited Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. Under Commonwealth schemes for exchange and training, military personnel from Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Guyana underwent training in Canada for various periods.

In recognition of the Commonwealth Caribbean's interest to Canada and to Canadians, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation sent a reporting team to the area early in the year, which resulted in firsthand reports on the region's political and economic situation. Elections in the Bahamas returned an incumbent government, while in the Eastern Caribbean the move towards independence among several of the West Indian Associated States continued.