

Human security: At the heart of Canada's agenda

The OAS has embraced the concept of human security, largely as a result of the Canadian-led drug dialogue at last year's General Assembly in Guatemala. Advancing human security issues will be a key objective in Windsor. In a speech to the OAS Permanent Council on February 11, Minister Axworthy proposed a dialogue session on this important issue at the General Assembly.

Canada's goal is to strengthen the connections between the family of inter-American institutions, including the Inter-American Children's Institute, the Inter-American Commission of Women and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. To give further impetus to work on the proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations, Canada will be looking for a strong resolution on Indigenous issues at the General Assembly. Also to be presented are results of the first gathering of hemispheric parliamentarians under the Parliamentary Network of the Americas.

Canada will seek to make the Windsor meeting more inclusive, conducted in a spirit of institutional transparency and openness. Immediately before the General Assembly, Mr. Axworthy will participate in a Democracy Forum organized by the Montréal-based International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development and the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. In Windsor, Canada expects to welcome the largest civil society contingent ever seen at an OAS General Assembly. In addition, Foreign Ministers will be presented with a youth declaration by a representative of the Model OAS General Assembly (MOAS), held at the University of Alberta in Edmonton this past March 27 to 31.

The Model OAS General Assembly: The voice of youth

The Edmonton gathering marked the first time in its 20-year history that the MOAS was held outside of Washington, D.C. Attending the event were students from 46 post-secondary institutions in Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States and Venezuela. Canada was represented by students from 18 academic institutions in five provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec).

Much like the OAS General Assembly, the MOAS brings together students from all over the Americas to debate and discuss hemispheric issues, with each university representing a different OAS member country. Traditionally the MOAS has been led by students from the United States; in contrast, the Edmonton gathering attracted a significantly larger number of students from Latin America and the Caribbean, making it a truly hemispheric event.

The Cultural Showcase: An invitation to the public

In Windsor, the public will have a chance to see examples of Canadian-led initiatives in the OAS and also to learn about the General Assembly's host city and the surrounding region of Essex County. Opening in late May, the Cultural Showcase will include a children's art exhibit on human rights, an OAS Museum of the Americas exhibit, an exhibit on banning landmines, an Interactive Americas kiosk, and a City of Windsor and Essex County display.

Complementing the Showcase will be a program of waterfront activities as part of the Carousel of Nations multicultural festival sponsored by the City of Windsor. Events will include performances by local musicians, artists and dancers, plus a display of fireworks and a flotilla along the Detroit River.

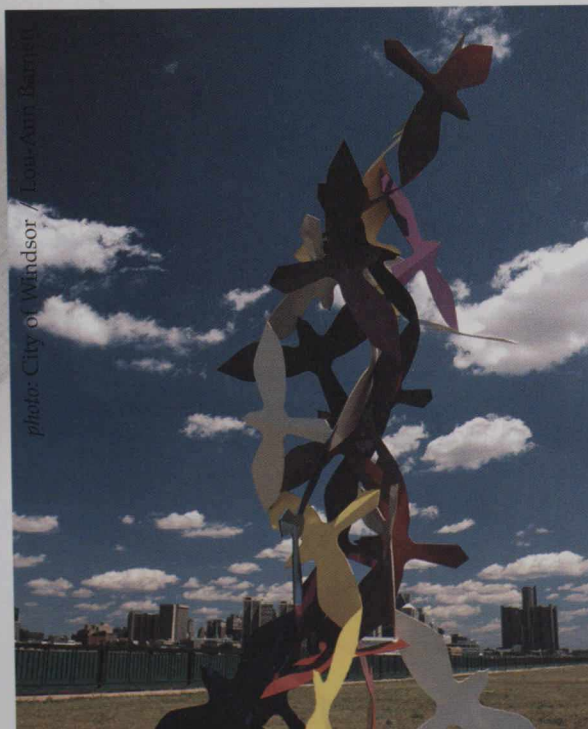


photo: City of Windsor / Lisa Ann Barrett

Morning Flight, Gerald Gladstone's soaring sculpture, against the backdrop of the city of Windsor, Ontario