

CANADA IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

Canada has an excellent relationship with the new South Africa. In 1994, Canada re-established full diplomatic relations with South Africa and opened a trade office in Johannesburg. The 1996 Bill of Rights of the South African constitution is heavily influenced by Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In 2001, Mandela was given honorary Canadian citizenship.

The relationship between Canada and South Africa today offers tremendous opportunities. The country is Canada's third-largest African trading partner, after Algeria and Angola, and is by far Canada's largest export destination in Africa. Bilateral merchandise trade between the two countries amounted to almost \$1.8 billion in 2008. Canada's investments here are highly concentrated in mineral exploration, extraction and services, with Canadian mining investment in South Africa estimated at \$2.24 billion.

A DEMANDING MISSION

Meeting the challenges and seizing the opportunities that emerge from our relationship with South Africa are the daily preoccupations of a busy mission. As South African officials positively comment, Canada's last four high commissioners have been women: Lucie Edwards, Sandelle Scrimshaw, Ruth Archibald and, since last September, Adèle Dion.

The job is demanding. The mission has 22 Canada-based staff and 49 locally engaged staff distributed over eight programs. It is also accredited to Namibia, Lesotho, Madagascar and Mauritius.

In the past two decades, Canada has provided more than \$200 million in development assistance to South Africa. Among the highest priorities is HIV/AIDS, which afflicts some 18 percent of adults. Another is enhancing South Africa's capacity to deliver government services; the inadequacy of local governments has led to considerable unrest in poor townships.

Darshana Pema, an LES development officer for CIDA and a native of South Africa, is the High Commission's latest recruit. Darshana was introduced to Canada by spending a year in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, as a Rotary International Exchange student in 2003. Since joining the mission four months ago, she has found the work to be a learning experience. "It is enriching to be able to help my country in areas that are of vital importance to its future," Darshana explains.

WORLD CUP FEVER

Soccer does not quite hold the pre-eminence among Canadian sports fans that it does for South Africans. The Canadian soccer team's failure to qualify for the World Cup means that Canadians will not be able to follow the fortunes of their national soccer team as South Africans will their beloved *Bafana Bafana* (The Boys).

Nonetheless, Canada will be present through K'Naan, the Somali-born Canadian singer whose song *Wavin' Flag* has been chosen as the official 2010 FIFA World Cup anthem. It will ring across South Africa and on international broadcasts—and may serve to inspire new achievements after the matches it was written for are a fading memory.

Valery Yiptong is the locally engaged public affairs officer in Canada's High Commission in Pretoria; she has also held LES positions in Canada's missions in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Geoff White is the political counsellor in Pretoria.

At a Glance [South Africa]

Capitals: ~~Cape Town (legislative)~~

~~Pretoria (administrative)~~

~~Bloemfontein (judicial)~~

Population: ~~48.7 million~~

Official languages: ~~Afrikaans, English,~~

~~Ndebele, Sesotho, Sesotho sa Leboa,~~

~~Setswana, SiSwati, Tsonga, Venda,~~

~~Xhosa, Zulu~~

Total area: ~~1.2 million km²~~

GDP per capita: ~~\$6,600 (2008)~~

Currency: ~~Rand (ZAR)~~

Canadian exports to South Africa:

~~\$944 million (2008)~~

Canadian imports from South Africa:

~~\$844 million (2008)~~

Johannesburg skyline

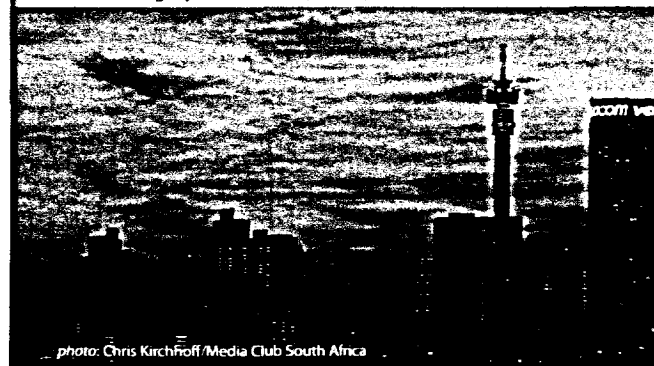


photo: Chris Kirchhoff/Media Club South Africa