



# Canadian Foreign Policy and International Communications

## Edmonton Report

### Introduction

*The National Forum on Canada's International Relations took place on November 2, 1996 at the Stollery Centre on the University of Alberta campus. Fifty people from Alberta, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, representing NGOs, youth, academics, professionals, government and business participated in the Forum.*

*Also in attendance were the Honourable Raymond Chan, Secretary of State Asia Pacific, Steven Lee, National Director of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, Michael Pearson, Senior Policy Advisor to the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, and Brian Stevenson, Senior Policy Advisor to the Honourable Arthur Eggleton.*

In the opening segment of the Forum, participants were addressed by the Honourable Raymond Chan, Steven Lee, and Dr. Tom Keating. In their remarks, Mr. Chan and Mr. Lee set forth the context and objectives of the Forum. In particular, Mr. Chan highlighted the importance of consulting the public, remarking that they are often more attuned to subtle changes than those people intricately involved in the foreign policy process.

In doing so, Mr. Chan underscored the earlier remarks of Steven Lee, regarding the purpose and function of the Forum in the consultative process of foreign policy development.

Dr. Keating provided an overview of the messages Canada has communicated to the world in the post-1945 era. Keating argued that the essence of these messages can be found in St. Laurent's 1947 Gray Lecture. In the decades following, the practice of Canadian foreign policy demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the principles articulated therein, even when governments attempted to reorder the priorities.

Keating suggested that the current emphasis on commercialization is problematic because it ignores the social and human factors which are difficult to quantify. It was pointed out for example, that if peacekeeping is discussed only in economic terms--that it would be cheaper to contribute to prevention than to peacekeeping--the logical extension of the argument is to avoid participating. It is extremely important to pay close attention to the content of our messages, not simply their volume or cost.

### Morning Plenary Session

The approach taken at the Forum in Edmonton was to ask participants to identify the priority messages that Canada should be communicating to the world. The following themes were articulated:

Canada must communicate a cohesive message directed at a specific audience and via the appropriate media. What are the appropriate roles for government, business and NGOs in communicating Canadian values. In particular, the message sent by businesses participating in trade missions were a concern. There was a call