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MARCH 12 IS COMMONWEALTH DAY

On Monday, March 12, Commonwealth Day will be observed in Canada and throughout the Commonwealth for the eighth consecutive year. At the 1975 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, Prime Minister Trudeau proposed that one day should be set aside each year as Commonwealth Day. The purpose of this annual observance would be to make the Commonwealth's many and varied activities better known to its people in all the regions of the world, but particularly in the schools.

The Commonwealth is a unique international organization of states embracing 49 countries of all races, religions and cultures, varying from large continental nations like Canada to small island states such as Fiji or Dominica. It remains an important element in Canadian foreign policy and over the years Canada has played a major role in redefining the modern Commonwealth in its evolution from British Empire to a voluntary association of independent nations, all recognizing the Queen as the symbolic Head of the Commonwealth. In a unique family or club atmosphere it provides an unparalleled opportunity for frank, open and friendly discussions on a continuing basis not only at the highest official levels among Heads of Government and Ministers, Parliamentarians and officials but also among a vast network of over 250 non-governmental organizations that include professionals, scholars, labour representatives and students.

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Across the country schools, public libraries, and branches of the Royal Commonwealth Society have been provided with Commonwealth Day posters and information material to assist in plans to mark the occasion. The lesson to be learned is a valuable one - that of successful multilateralism in action, perhaps mankind's best hope for future survival.

A varied program of events - both official and non-governmental - has been planned for the observance of Commonwealth Day, including Church services to be held on Sunday, March 11, in major cities across the country under the auspices of the Royal Commonwealth Society. An Interfaith Service will be held in Ottawa at the McLeod-Stewarton United Church, Bank Street at Argyle, at 4:00 p.m.