



# communiqué

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## COMMONWEALTH DAY

March 11 will be observed as Commonwealth Day in Canada and throughout the Commonwealth for the ninth consecutive year. A varied program has been planned to mark the occasion in Ottawa, including an interfaith service at 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 10 at the McLeod-Stewarton United Church. On Monday Parliament Hill will be the scene of a number of events organized by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the High Commissioners of 26 countries represented in Canada.

The Commonwealth is the oldest existing international organization to which Canada belongs. This unique association embraces 49 countries of all races, religions and cultures, representing a quarter of mankind. They share a common working language, the heritage of common law and parliamentary traditions, and a pragmatic approach to problem-solving which has developed over the years. All recognize the Queen as the symbolic Head of the Commonwealth.

Although its strengths are rooted in history, the modern Commonwealth is an immensely practical organization and one that continues to evolve to meet the challenges of changing times. Apart from its many technical assistance and training programs, the Commonwealth provides an unparalleled opportunity for open and friendly discussions in a "family" atmosphere, 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.

The emphasis of Commonwealth Day has traditionally been on young people, which in 1985 gains added relevance because of International Youth Year. To help heighten public awareness of the Commonwealth, schools and libraries across the country have been provided with information material to assist them in organizing special projects. For its part, the Commonwealth Secretariat is working closely with the United Nations to develop programs and seminars to bring youth from around the world in closer touch with each other. A major Commonwealth conference of young people is to be held in Ottawa in June. The valuable example the Commonwealth can offer them is one of tolerance and cooperation across racial and religious barriers.