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Relations between Canada and  
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## Canadian Foreign Policy

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### RELATIONS BETWEEN CANADA AND COLOMBIA

A trade agreement with Colombia ratified in 1977 helped open commercial prospects for Canadian business and since then Canada has become increasingly important as a supplier to the Colombian market. In 1980, Canadian exports to Colombia increased by 90 per cent over those of the previous year to reach a total of \$185 million. Canada imports about 50 per cent of its coffee from Colombia and the country is one of the major recipients of our development assistance in Latin America.

#### Bilateral Relations

Although Canada and Colombia established diplomatic relations in 1951, relatively little attention was given by either government to developing the relationship until the late 1960s. In 1968, the Secretary of State for External Affairs led a mission, which included also the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and other Cabinet ministers, to Latin America. In 1971 a trade agreement was signed and Canada began providing bilateral assistance through a technical co-operation program in 1972.

The visit of the External Affairs minister in 1977 and that of the Minister of State for Trade in 1979 have further strengthened the relationship.



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## Trade and Aid

Although Canada still imports most of its coffee from Colombia, the percentage has declined in recent years so that there is no longer a rough balance of trade. In 1980, Canadian exports to Colombia had a value of \$185 million as against imports of \$101 million. Canadian exports include newsprint, asbestos, plastic and synthetic rubber, aluminum, barley, aircraft, computer equipment, auto parts and strip steel. Canadian imports from Colombia, besides green and instant coffee, include corduroy, bananas, fresh flowers, trees and shrubs and, since 1981, fuel oil.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has an \$8.3 million aid program in Colombia, one of the largest in Latin America. As well as institutional co-operation, CIDA supports a number of rural projects and schools, including one that teaches furniture building. It also assists some non-governmental associations.

In addition, the International Development Research Centre, which was founded and is financed mostly by Canada, has its regional office in Bogota and its work is well known among government agencies and academics.

Colombia, which has a gross domestic product of (U.S.) \$26 billion, showed a growth in its economy of 6 per cent in 1980. Its major exports include coffee, fuel oil, cotton, tobacco, sugar, and textiles. Among its imports are transportation equipment, machinery, industrial metals, raw materials, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Its most important markets are Japan, the USA, Germany, Venezuela and the Netherlands, with its imports coming chiefly from the USA, Germany, Japan and Ecuador.

## History and Politics

Colombia has a population of more than 27 million made up of a number of ethnic groups: Mestizos (Spanish Indians), Caucasians, Mulattos, besides the Spanish settlers.

As Nueva Granada, Colombia was a Spanish colony for 300 years until it established its independence in 1819 as the Republic of Gran Colombia which included what are now



Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama as well as present-day Colombia. By 1903 the other three countries had all seceded. From the late 1940s to 1957, Colombia was wracked by "La Violencia," a turbulent period during which 300,000 people were killed.

A Liberal-Conservative coalition government brought an end to the violence in 1958, with provision for the presidency to alternate between the two parties every four years and for key positions to be equally divided. President Belisario Betancur (conservative) was elected on May 30, 1982. Inauguration ceremonies are scheduled for August 7, 1982.

Prospects for future development of Canada-Colombia economic ties are good. In addition to the already extensive trade and aid, there is strong Canadian interest in participating in such large projects as the El Cerrejon Coal project, the domestic satellite project and mass transit systems for Bogota, Medellin and Cali. Our expertise in agriculture, forestry and hydroelectricity made Canada highly competitive in these fields as well.





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