

Canada's international status

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The growth of Canada's international status is reflected in the development of the external affairs department since its establishment in 1909. Until the 20th century Canadian negotiations with foreign countries were conducted through the British foreign office and dealings with other parts of the Empire through a Colonial office. The gradual recognition of Canadian autonomy in international affairs and increased Canadian responsibilities abroad made expansion of services and representation after World War I not only inevitable but imperative. An important step in the evolution of Canada's international status was an agreement reached at the 1926 Imperial Conference allowing for Canadian sovereignty in international negotiations and affairs.

In the 1920s and 1930s Canada established its own diplomatic relations with several countries, including the United States, France and Japan. Representation was expanded greatly since then, especially since World War II, with the result that Canada now has formal diplomatic relations with 155 countries and maintains diplomatic, consular or trade representation in 82 of them.

Membership in international organizations has entailed establishment of a permanent Canadian delegation to the United Nations in New York and a Canadian office at the organization's European headquarters in Geneva in 1949. These permanent missions have since been expanded to include UN agencies in Paris and Vienna. Canada was one of the founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 and when the NATO permanent council was established in 1952 a Canadian permanent delegation was set up in Paris (transferred to Brussels in 1967). Canada maintains a permanent delegation to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris, and a mission of Canada to the European communities in Brussels is responsible for Canada's relations with the European Economic Community, the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Coal and Steel Community. Canada also maintains a permanent observer mission to the Organization of American States in Washington, DC. In addition, officials of the external affairs department represent Canada at many international conferences.

Today Canada's status is reflected in its role in international negotiations over such vital issues as law of the sea, energy reserves, nuclear non-proliferation, north-south economic dialogue and human rights.

Federal-provincial aspects of Canada's international relations

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A federal-provincial co-ordination division was established in 1967 in the external affairs department to maintain liaison with the provinces to facilitate their legitimate international activities in a manner that would meet provincial objectives consistent with a unified Canadian foreign policy.

The federal government's position on provincial international relations was outlined in the 1968 white paper *Federalism and international relations*, which emphasizes that Canada's foreign relations must serve and reflect the interests of all provinces as well as those of its two major linguistic communities. The federal government's international policies include recognition of legitimate provincial interests beyond national borders and continued promotion of national unity through adequate international projection of Canada's bilingual character.

Provincial participation at international conferences and in the work of international organizations is assured by including provincial officials on Canadian delegations and by canvassing provincial governments for their views on positions and attitudes that Canada adopts on subjects treated by these organizations. These include areas of particular interest to the provinces such as human and civil rights, education, health, agriculture, labour and environment.