

Consular and immigration affairs. While the Employment and Immigration Commission has overall responsibility for immigration policy development and program design, the Department of External Affairs Canada is responsible for the delivery of the overseas component of the program. The intake of refugees and other immigrants is managed through annual levels set by the government, after extensive consultations across Canada. Over 200 visa officers, located at 65 posts, select not only potential immigrants but also those seeking temporary entry to study, work or visit Canada. In 1987, a total of 138,442 immigrants and 431,768 visitors were issued visas overseas.

In managing the program abroad, External Affairs has a role to play in the development of immigration policy by bringing it into the wider context of foreign policy. Visa officers are involved in liaison and consultation with other governments on a range of topics, such as immigration and refugee policies, and demographic and other social policy issues.

As a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees, Canada has international obligations to meet and a humanitarian tradition to uphold. The administration of the refugee program thus is a major priority in the delivery of the immigration program abroad. In 1987, visa officers abroad selected and processed over 21,000 displaced persons under the refugee and designated class provisions of the Immigration Act and Regulations.

Large numbers of Canadians travel and reside in other countries. Through its diplomatic and consular missions, the department serves their needs for passports, citizenship documents and notarial services, and gives advice and assistance on a wide range of Canadian and foreign matters. It also helps Canadians who find themselves in distress while abroad, whether through loss of money and travel documents, arrest and imprisonment, illness or death, civil disturbances, natural disasters, or other troubles.

Passport services. Passports are issued to Canadian citizens through the main passport office in Hull and through offices in St. John's, Halifax, Fredericton, Montreal, Saint-Laurent, Quebec City, Ottawa, Toronto, North York, Scarborough, Hamilton, London, Windsor, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria. New passport offices are scheduled to open in Regina, Thunder Bay and Jonquière. Abroad, the service is provided through Canadian diplomatic and consular missions. Certificates of identity are issued in Canada

to eligible legally landed non-Canadians. United Nations refugee travel documents are issued in Canada to residents eligible under the UN refugee convention.

21.3 Multilateral activities

21.3.1 Canada and the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth has evolved into an international association of 48 sovereign nations embracing approximately one-quarter of the earth's surface and one billion of its people, who are diverse in race, colour, creed and language. Comprising both developed and developing countries, the Commonwealth represents a unique association whose members share many of the same traditions, political and social values, attitudes and institutions. All members collectively subscribe to certain common ideals known as the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles. Commonwealth membership is not an alternative, but a complement to other forms of international co-operation — its members believe in and work for the success of the United Nations. As well, most of them belong to other international organizations and to regional associations of states.

Membership in the Commonwealth and pursuit of its work and goals are an important aspect of foreign policy. Canadian objectives have remained constant: to strengthen the association and its contributions to international peace and progress, and to assist its development as a vehicle for consultation and practical co-operation. In recent years, the needs of the smallest and poorest member countries and of apartheid in South Africa have dominated Commonwealth affairs. The organization has no binding rules; decisions are by consensus rather than formal vote.

The Commonwealth Secretariat in London organizes and services official Commonwealth conferences, facilitates exchanges of information between member countries and brings together their views. Canada pays its share of the budget of the Secretariat and contributes to many other Commonwealth institutions and programs, including the Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation, the Commonwealth youth program, the Commonwealth foundation, the Commonwealth scholarship and fellowship plan and the Commonwealth science council.

Canada was host to a meeting, in Vancouver, of the Commonwealth heads of government in October 1987 — the first occasion for such a Commonwealth conference to be held in Canada since 1973. One of the results of the Vancouver meeting was an agreement to create the Commonwealth