

Canada celebrates 50 years of Commonwealth Scholarships

Ottawa, October 29, 2009: This evening, a Reception celebrating the 50th anniversary of Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) was held at Ottawa's Fairmont Château Laurier Hotel. The event was co-hosted by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) which is responsible for Canada's participation in the CSFP and the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) which currently administers the program with funding from DFAIT.

The celebration's Patron was The Right Honourable Madam Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, P.C. Her remarks honouring 50 years of achievement were followed by presentations by two Alumni of the CSFP: Mr. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of Canada, who studied at the University of Oxford as a Commonwealth Scholar of the United Kingdom, and Dr. Basil Alexander, Senior Lecturer, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, who studied at the University of Guelph as a Canadian Commonwealth Scholar.

Ms. Karen McBride, President of CBIE, introduced the speakers and drew attention to the durability of the Commonwealth Scholarships Program: "It's a milestone for a truly remarkable multilateral program that has weathered many challenges, and, over five decades, has achieved so very much at the individual, national and international levels."

Chief Justice McLachlin noted that 26,000 individuals have benefited since the CSFP's inception in 1959. She pointed out that the CSFP was a Canadian idea that has attracted an array of talented individuals whose character and career have been developed and enhanced by the experiences gained during their scholarship years. Laureates of the program include numerous university and college presidents and professors, journalists and editors, lawyers and judges, cabinet ministers and members of parliament, influencers and policy-makers.

Over 150 guests attended, including Professor Symons, C.C., Founding President of Trent University, who has played many eminent roles in Canadian and Commonwealth affairs; numerous alumni, both Canadians who studied abroad under a Commonwealth Scholarship and non-Canadians who studied in Canada or a third Commonwealth country; High Commissioners and other diplomatic representatives; and university and education association representatives.

About the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan:

The idea for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) was sparked by an influential speech by Dr. Sidney Smith, a former President of the University of Toronto and later Canadian Minister of External Affairs, in September 1958. The speech called for better educational links between Commonwealth countries.

Professor George Curtis, Founding Dean of the Law School at the University of British Columbia, headed the committee that developed and launched the CSFP.

Since its inception in 1959, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) has grown to be one of the most prestigious international schemes for graduate study in the world. More than 26,000 Commonwealth citizens have held awards, many going on to reach the very highest levels of their profession.

So far, 1,900 Canadians have studied overseas on Commonwealth scholarships. To date Canada has hosted over 4,400 Commonwealth scholars from 50 Commonwealth countries.



Mr. Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of Canada, Ms. Karen McBride, President of the Canadian Bureau for International Education, The Right Honourable Madam Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin, P.C., Dr. Basil Alexander, Senior Lecturer, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, and Mr. Chris Greenshields, Director, International Education and Youth Division, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada

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CBIE is a national not-for-profit educational association made up of nearly 200 school boards, colleges, universities and associates. It is involved in both aid-supported and trade-related educational projects around the world.