

High Commissioner for Canada

During May, I was privileged to meet His Excellency, Mr Michael Small, High Commissioner for Canada on his First Official visit to Western Australia.

Accompanying Mr Small was Mr Robert Coleman, Counsellor/Commercial, Canadian High Commission (Canberra) and Mr Roger Blake, Honorary Consul, Consulate of Canada (Perth).

Not only is Mr Small High Commissioner for Canada to Australia but also with concurrent accreditation to the Federated State of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. He began his current assignment in September 2010.

Mr Small joined the Canadian Foreign Service in 1981 and has had postings in Malaysia, Brazil, Costa Rica and Mexico. He also served as Canadian Ambassador to Cuba from October 2000 to August 2003.

It was interesting to hear of the High Commissioner's time as Coordinator for the Canadian delegation to the Rio Earth Summit from 1990 to 1992. Then in July 2006, he was appointed Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Issues, where he served as Commonwealth Senior Official for the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Kampala, Uganda. Perth will be hosting CHOGM in October 2011.

The similarities between Canada and Australia are numerous - both countries are part of the British Commonwealth, share a common language, legal system and government.

Geographically, Canada and Australia are also of similar size, with each being more populated throughout the east coast than the west. The provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia closely match that of Western Australia in production of petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, nickel, gold and agricultural products. Nickel is Western Australia's top export commodity to Canada, accounting for 70% of total export earnings.

Both countries are members of the Cairns Group of agricultural fair trade nations, a diverse coalition bringing together developed and developing countries from Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. The Cairns Group comprises 19 countries and remains an influential voice in the agricultural reform debate.

We had an interesting discussion on Canada's recent election which produced a series of results which confounded the pollsters but resulted in a majority government for the first time in some years.



Picture: (from left) Mr Robert Coleman, Counsellor, Canadian High Commissioner (Canberra), the President of the Legislative Council, Hon. Barry House, Mr Michael Small, High Commissioner for Canada, and Mr Roger Blake, Honorary Consul, from the Consulate of Canada (Perth).