

Opening Statement

by

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

**Roundtable Discussion on
'Canada's Worldview - and Relations with India'**

Sapru House, New Delhi

27 June, 2014

H.E. High Commissioner Mr. Stewart Beck, High Commissioner of Canada in New Delhi, Deputy High Commissioner Mr. Nickel, Ambassador P.K. Budhwar, Prof Christopher Raj and Ambassador Narayan, Excellencies, friends, ladies and gentlemen.



(L-R) Mr. Jim Nickel, Deputy High Commissioner, Canada; Ambassador R.L. Narayan; H.E. Mr. Stewart Beck, High Commissioner of Canada in New Delhi; Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, DG, ICWA; Ambassador P.K. Budhwar and Prof Christopher Raj, JNU, New Delhi.

We are pleased to host the Round Table Discussion on ‘Canada’s Worldview and Relations with India’. This discussion is held with the aim to understand the current trajectory of Indo-Canadian ties. The two countries are brought together by their imperial history and today, remained connected via the commonwealth. The purpose of this discussion is to help foster a deeper understanding for both, thus build stronger relations for the future.

2. Canada and India have longstanding friendly relations, built upon our shared traditions of democracy, pluralism and strong people-to-people contacts. The current phase for the Canada-

India bilateral relationship moves this relationship beyond the concerns of the Cold War era. Canada's relations with India have become omni-directional. Virtually every sector is in the midst of developing or executing India-related strategies. There are various areas for cooperation alignment: trade/commerce, we share similar views on important international issues such as environmental protection, education etc. There is great potential to explore military cooperation between the Indian and Canadian armed forces, peacekeeping operations under the UN, counter-terrorism etc.

3. At the national level, the two visits by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to India in the space of three years accompanied by path-breaking policy agreements on civilian nuclear co-operation, the launch of research partnerships between major Canadian research-intensive universities and their Indian partners, the negotiations around CEPA and FIPPA, the opening of the new Consulate in Bengaluru – are all substantive developments.

4. In August 2008 India, welcomed Canada's reversal of decades old policy that prohibited nuclear cooperation with India in the aftermath of New Delhi's decision to test nuclear devices in 1974 and 1998. This decision is historically significant. Canada and India have other complementary interests. India is the third-largest consumer of energy in the world and seeks diversification of supply to provide greater energy security and to fuel its dynamic growth. India is looking to Canadian energy exports to help power its transformation into an economic giant.

5. Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird hosted Mr. Salman Khurshid, India's Minister of External Affairs, for the inaugural Canada-India Foreign Ministers' Dialogue (September 2013) to discuss issues of mutual interest in Ottawa. This annual bilateral consultation provides an opportunity to discuss areas of mutual interest including the potential of the Canada-India economic relationship and key global international security issues.

6. Canada is home to over one million Persons of Indian Origin. The political profile of the community has grown over the years. There are eight Indo-Canadian MPs in the House of Commons and one in the Senate. Two PIO MPs are Ministers of State in the Federal Government and one PIO MP is Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Minister. In view of the

large Indian diaspora in Canada, there are a number of organisations promoting Indian culture, especially performing arts. There is a vibrant albeit informal, network of “Friends of Canada” in different parts of India. They are important as “bridge builders” for both, India and the Indian community in Canada and Canada.

7. The economic and geographic diversity of Canada is a tremendous advantage and virtually every province and sector is now actively engaged with the India file – ports, natural gas, oil sands, lentils, clean technology, forestry, steel and the broader resources sector and higher education. Indian companies continue their globalizing presence, Canada has emerged as a notable destination to expand North American business strategies. Canada deserves special mention because of its rising importance to India in terms of economic ties and human migration; Canada attracts a sizable population of Indian students and job seekers.

8. This is an exciting period in Canada-India relations. The long term opportunities are readily apparent across many sectors. We are making good progress, but we will need to intensify our efforts in the years ahead.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.
