



**THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
OF CANADA**

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RCS Canada Press Statement on Racism and Equality

Ottawa - The Royal Commonwealth Society of Canada (RCSC) stands for freedom, equality, and equity of all people.

As a civil society organization within the Commonwealth family of 54 voluntarily-associated independent nations, we support and uphold the common principles and aspirations enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter of 2013 and our own Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In addition, Canada signed the 1979 Lusaka Declaration on Racism and Racial Prejudice along with all Commonwealth countries which recognized that everyone has the right to equality before the law and equal justice under the law. This includes access to the right to citizenship, the right to vote and the right to: education, health, employment, occupation, housing, social security and cultural life. Particular importance was attached to ensuring that children shall be protected from practices which may foster racism and racial prejudice and the support of indigenous peoples. The Lusaka Declaration was signed in Zambia in the context of eliminating the policy of apartheid in South Africa and further emphasizes that "the peoples of the Commonwealth have the right to live freely in dignity and equality."

But the road to true equality is a long one and requires an awareness that legislation alone cannot eliminate racism and racial prejudice, we endorse the need to initiate public information and education policies designed to promote understanding, respect, pride, and friendship among peoples and racial groups and eliminate discrimination.

RCS Canada continues to advocate for a national commemoration of August 1st as Emancipation Day - the date upon which chattel slavery ended throughout the British Empire, including Canada, in 1834 through the Slavery Abolition Act 1833. The Toronto Caribbean Carnival, or Caribana, started as a celebration of Emancipation Day and has grown into a celebration of pride in Afro-Caribbean heritage. In 2008, the province of Ontario dedicated August 1st as Emancipation Day. To declare August 1st as Emancipation Day throughout Canada claims for the entire country a meaningful commemoration of equity for all.

The success of this national designation can be but a stepping stone to opening the doors for more education and action to address inequity, wherever it may be and in whatever form. The Royal Commonwealth Society of Canada stands for dignity, justice, and respect so that working together collective solutions for the healing of divisions and the strengthening of communities can better be achieved. RCS Canada endeavours to continue to work to ensure the virtues of equality and equity are incorporated for all human beings in every institution and adopted in the daily life of every individual.

About RCS Canada

The Royal Commonwealth Society of Canada (RCS) is both a learned Society and club, non-partisan, independent of governments and supported solely by public generosity. The RCS engages with its youth, civil society, business and government networks to address issues that matter to the Citizens of the Commonwealth. Its primary focus is to the promotion of young people throughout the Commonwealth. For more information, please visit www.rcs.ca.

David Haisell, Communications Director
Phone: (226) 748-3113
Email: info@rcs.ca