

Statute of Westminster Day
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Monday December 11, 2006 the Royal Union Flag flies from a wide variety of Federal buildings throughout Ottawa and across Canada. The reason for this is to honour of Statute of Westminster Day; what is in essence Canada's Day of Independence.

Seventy-five years ago this coming Monday, Canada gained complete control over its ability to conduct international relations. This was the culmination of many conferences held with the other "Dominions" of the period; Australia, Britain, Newfoundland, New Zealand, the Irish Free State and South Africa. From Resolution IX of the Imperial War Conference 1917, that set into motion the Statute and Canada's ability to conduct certain foreign relations, to the 1926 Imperial Conference and Balfour Declaration which made the Governor General the representative of the Sovereign alone and not that of the British government, Canada played **the** leading role in modernizing our relationship with Britain and other members of the Commonwealth.

Unlike many countries, Canada's march towards independence was dotted with Constitutional conferences, not armed revolt or rebellion. In many ways this speaks to part of the Canadian character.

Through this noble Statute most of Canada's Commonwealth cousins gained independence. From the rocky shores of Newfoundland, then a separate Dominion, to the South Pacific with Australia and New Zealand, the statute has serve as the template that

has brought independence to more than sixty countries from around the world. The British Empire was transformed into the Commonwealth, a valuable organization that continues to this day.

This is one of the most significant days in Canadian history, yet it is sadly ignored. A fellow New Brunswicker, the Right Honourable Richard Bedford Bennett was our Prime Minister when the Statute became law. Bennett commented “I realize that this is the culmination of a long long effort that has been made since we were a colony, to become the self-governing Dominion.” A rather modest way of recognizing Canada’s independent status, although not one lost on that great French Canadian orator and member of the *other place* Henri Bourassa who commented that the Statute “is the final touch given by the Prime Minister of this country to a legal monument which will doubtless mark an epoch in our Canadian history.”

I ask you to join with me in recognizing this important anniversary in the life and development of our great country.