

Remarks - Canada House Reception

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**Reception hosted by HE Gordon Campbell
Canada House
London, UK**

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**by
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President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning**

Your Excellency, Gordon Campbell, Dr. Linda Sissons, Chair and Members of the COL Board of Governors, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for your kind introduction. We are very grateful to the Government of Canada for its continuing financial and intellectual support and for hosting us in beautiful British Columbia, where Your Excellency was formerly our premier. And tonight we are especially grateful to you for hosting this reception to connect The Commonwealth of Learning or COL with this esteemed gathering.

As well as its headquarters in Vancouver, COL also has a regional office for Asia in Delhi. Having our two offices outside London, the traditional home of our Commonwealth, clearly reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth and provides an illustration of the expertise and resources available in its various regions.

COL is a small but important organization. What do we do? Our aim is to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning. Technology and distance education have an important role to play in providing access to education and training. We believe that giving people the opportunity to learn helps accelerate progress toward achieving the international development goals and the Commonwealth values of peace, equality, democracy and good governance. Our motto is 'learning for development'. The spirit of our motto requires that we contribute not just to the development of formal education but also to the strengthening of non-formal education and lifelong learning.

COL is a unique organisation that has the ability to respond to the needs of a wide range of stakeholders from the Batwa community in the forests of Uganda, who learn bee-keeping using mobile phones to the rural women in Malawi, who participate in health and development programmes through community radio. Our stakeholders include goat herders in India, construction workers in Nauru, rural girls in Pakistan and out-of-school youth in Jamaica. In addition, COL works in policy development and capacity building with ministries and institutions across the Commonwealth. Remaining relevant to such diverse constituencies and delivering on results present both challenges and opportunities.

Today, COL is recognised as a world class source of expertise in high quality open, distance and technology-based learning, and in these times of economic difficulty, the learning innovations that COL promotes are becoming more important than ever before. Your continued support will be critical in keeping COL at the forefront of human resource development in your countries.

We thank you for your continued confidence. If you have any questions, I and my colleagues, our Vice President Mr. Vis Naidoo and our Director Ms. Doris McEachern will be happy to answer them.