



## **Governor General David Johnston's speech at PBDCanada2011 convention – June 2011**

### **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Canada (PBDCanada2011) Convention**

Toronto, Thursday, June 9, 2011

What a pleasure it is for me to be here today for this important gathering. The occasion is even more special given that this is the Year of India in Canada, which is doing so much to share the wonders of Indian art, culture and history with all Canadians.

Truly, we have much to celebrate and to learn from one another. At the opening of his award-winning travel memoir of India, author M.G. Vassanji writes:

“It would take many lifetimes, it was said to me during my first visit, to see all of India.”

I feel a similar sentiment when I think of the long and fruitful relationship between the people of India and Canada. To do this story justice, we would need far more time than we have today. For generations, and in every sphere of society, Canada has been benefitting enormously from the contributions of Indo-Canadians.

This conference aims to build bridges with India and to strengthen links between members of the Indian Diaspora and the countries of North America and the Caribbean. Here in Canada, we are fortunate to have a large Indo-Canadian population that is playing a role of growing importance in the life of our country. At the same time, India itself is growing in prominence in our multipolar world. This is leading to new opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between our two nations.

I was interested to learn that, by 2017, the Indian Diaspora in Canada will be the most populous of any nation in the G8. That same year, Canadians will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, and I would like to take a moment to consider the significance of these two milestones together.

As governor general, my goal is to help shape Canada into a truly smart and caring nation. By this, I mean a nation where all Canadians can succeed, contribute and develop their talents to their fullest potential. We want this to be a country that increases and applies the knowledge of its citizens to improve the condition of all—at home and abroad.

Canadians have a long history of coming together and helping one another. For centuries, wave upon wave of immigrants have come here, often giving up everything in the old country, driven by an overwhelming desire: a better life for themselves and for their children.

To achieve this goal and to fashion a smarter, more caring Canada in a fairer, more just world, I believe we must focus our efforts. In particular, we must support our families and our children; encourage philanthropy and volunteerism; and reinforce learning and innovation. The



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contributions of Indo-Canadians will be central to our success, and I am encouraged to see so many of these topics reflected in your agenda for the next few days.

This conference is an example to the world in forging links between the mother country—in your case, India—and the adoptive nations of expatriates. As such, you have a tremendous opportunity to influence the ways in which members of a diaspora balance the relationship between their nation of origin and their new homeland.

I believe it is vitally important that newcomers to Canada—and indeed to any country—are able to respect their heritage while embracing the society in which they live. And it is our privilege and our duty as citizens of a smart and caring nation to return this embrace, welcoming the contributions of new arrivals and the wealth of experience, knowledge and humanity they bring.

As we approach Canada's 150th birthday in 2017, I want to challenge you to imagine new ways to collaborate and to build trust and belonging among us. My predecessor the Right Honourable Jeanne Sauvé once said that, despite our varied origins, "We are Canadians determined to carry on the building of a great nation."

Let us extend our vision for this great nation to include the dream of building a smarter, more caring world.

Ours is a common cause, and together we must learn from the past, embrace the present and look to our shared future with confidence and respect.

I wish you a productive and enlightening conference.

Thank you.