



Dear Friends of the Czech Republic,

Canada has stood by our nation since the creation of our modern statehood in 1918. During the dark times of World War II, Canada was the first great power to recognize the Czechoslovak government in exile on October 12, 1940. During the Cold War, the great country accepted countless Czech refugees. In response to the Soviet-led invasion into our country in 1968, in particular, Canada granted asylum to 12,000 Czechs and Slovaks. The fall of the Communist regime in 1989 marked a new beginning in Czech-Canadian relations. The cooperation between Canada and the Czech Republic has become remarkably intensive in all areas, including security and defense, business, education, science and research, culture, sports, and international advocacy of our shared values such as human rights. Canada is home to the second largest Czech compatriot community in the world. Czech-Canadians have played a key role in the creation of the special ties between our countries. The first wave of Czech immigration to Canada dates back to the last quarter of the 19th century. These early Czech-Canadians raised funds and fought for our independence in both World Wars. During the Cold War, Czech-Canadians formed one of the most influential centers of Czech exile. Over decades, they helped keep Czech democratic traditions and independent culture alive. The publishing house 68 Publishers of Mr. and Mrs. Škvorecký, for instance, saved the independent Czech literature of the Cold War era. Czech-Canadians played an important role in the development of our economic bond as well. Let me mention at least the following example. In 1920s, the First Czechoslovak Republic ranked among the top ten most advanced economies in the world. The Baťa Shoe Company was one of the symbols of our country's economic success. Tomáš Baťa Jr., the son of the empire's founder, moved the company's global headquarters to Canada during World War II and kept running it from there during the Cold War. During the revolutionary days of 1989, he rushed to see freedom return to his homeland and take part in the effort to put our economy back on its feet.

Today, our economy again marks significant success. For several years, the Czech Republic has ranked among the most stable and also among the fastest-growing economies in the European Union. Strongly believing in free trade, we were among the first countries of the European Union to ratify the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. We are convinced that CETA will continue to drive the economic growth on both sides of the Atlantic. Czech and Canadian economic structures are remarkably compatible, which further enhances the capacity for our cooperation. The following areas seem to show the most promise: ICT, including artificial intelligence and gaming; civil aviation and space technologies; the automotive industry; medicine and biotechnologies; agriculture and the food industry; the railway industry; mining; and manufacturing. The strong innovative potential of these fields is not a coincidence. The Czech Republic has placed a strong emphasis on innovation. The support of research cooperation between our countries will be an inherent part of our economic diplomacy in Canada. In 2019, the Czech Technology Agency issued a joint call for grant applications with its counterparts in Quebec and Alberta. We will continue to work with our Canadian partners to grow such opportunities for companies as well as research institutions to gain financial support for joint projects. Cooperation between our universities and initiatives such as the Working Holidays will have our attention as well.

As part of our economic diplomacy, we will organize economic and research missions from the Czech Republic to Canada as well as in the opposite direction. Every year, we will also support a Czech presence at several trade shows in Canada. For detailed updates, I would like to invite you to visit [www.mzv.cz/ottawa](http://www.mzv.cz/ottawa) and/or follow me on Twitter and Facebook @Borek Lizec. I have been fortunate to rely on the support of my colleagues from our Embassy in Ottawa, Consulate General in Toronto, CzechTrade Calgary, and our seven Honorary Consuls throughout the country. We look forward to you letting us know how we can assist.

**Bořek Lizec**

*Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Canada*