

Speech of Ambassador Martin Tlapa at the CSSK Gala Evening, 24.10.2025

- *Check against delivery* -

Dear Chairman David Beneš,

Dear Chairmen and Chairwomen of CSSK Branches,

Dear Chairman of Sokol Canada,

Dear delegates of the 70th Congress of the CSSK,

Dear compatriots!

It is an honor and a pleasure **to welcome so many great and active Czech patriots to Ottawa** today, who are working hard to promote the Czech community and the Czech Republic in all corners of Canada.

First of all, let me express my sincere thanks to all of you for your work in compatriot communities. For spreading the good name of the Czech Republic. For maintaining our national traditions. For teaching the Czech language. For all your great efforts!

I also appreciate the extremely **good relations between CSSK, the headquarters and its branches, with the Czech Embassy in Ottawa and Consulate General in Toronto**. We have a friendly, open and constructive cooperation.

A lot has been achieved this year:

- reopening of **the direct Toronto – Prague line** (in the summer season);
- **elections** – thanks to an intensive communication campaign and sharing information about the elections by all of you, and thanks to the opportunity to **vote by mail** for the first time in Czech history, 3 times more voters **voted in Canada this year** than in the previous election in

2021 – in total 586 valid votes were cast (despite the Canada Post strike, due to which some votes arrived late and could not be counted);

- **trade** between Canada and the Czech Republic is growing, reaching **1.4 billion CAD**;
- Investments **are also growing**, a total of **713 million CAD**; companies including the Czech ones in Canada such as Colt Canada, Litostroj/WIKOV, LINET are expanding their operations, investing, acquiring new factories;
- **dozens of compatriot events took place in Canada**, organized by CSSK, Czech schools, the Ottawa Embassy and the Consulate General in Toronto.

We meet today to celebrate **the anniversary of the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia**, which was created **107 years ago**, on October 28, 1918;

The democratic Czechoslovak tradition and the cultural and economic successes of the first Czechoslovak Republic represent something that **we are rightly proud of to this day!** And what unites us even after the division of the common state.

During the tragic historical turning points of the 20th century, **many Czechoslovaks found a new home in Canada**. They were received kindly, and they performed significant deeds here.

Let's just mention **Josef and Zdena Škvorecký** and the importance of their publishing house for the Czech culture. The **Bata** company. Or **Otto Jelinek**, a medalist, Canadian minister and ambassador, who also received a Czech award at the Embassy for his great contribution to the bilateral Canadian-Czech relations last year.

However, the Czech community is much wider. According to the last census from 2021, a total of **96 thousand Canadians** proudly declare their Czech or Czechoslovak origin.

Unfortunately, the number is decreasing, it used to be over 100 thousand.

We must be all the more vocal in spreading Czech culture, traditions and language in Canada.

An important goal of the Czech Republic, the Embassy in Ottawa and the Consulate in Toronto is therefore **to intensively support for communities of Czechs and Slovaks in Canada** – across provinces, age groups and organizations.

For 2025, Czech compatriot organizations throughout Canada received CZK **2 million 301 thousand** from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for their projects.

In total, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic contributed CZK 42 million to compatriot organizations around the world this year.

The strength and influence of any community is not about its size, but about **its unity and agility**.

The declining number of compatriots can be countered **by joining forces and increasing activity**.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to share even more **information about the events you organize**, about opportunities for cooperation such as planned travels of Czech artists to your communities.

I see significant potential in this sense especially at the level of the CSSK headquarters, where the newly **prepared new website** could become a central information hub about the activities of all CSSK branches – clear and modern.

It is equally important to use **modern communication tools to reach the youngest generation of Czech expats in Canada** – social networks such as **Facebook and Instagram** today have the same role for young people as television and radio had for previous generations.

I know that at present this connection **works very well between Czech schools in Canada and the US**, where school representatives share common

materials, talk about support for Czech language teaching, language and methodological courses.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Czech **Embassy in Ottawa** and **the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Toronto**, let me pledge a **maximum support for your activities!**

I look forward to **meeting you** during this **Czech weekend in Ottawa**.

I would like to thank the CSSK headquarters in Ottawa, Sokol Ottawa, and the team from my Embassy **for their enormous efforts in its preparation**.

And I appreciate the **efforts of all of you** who did not hesitate to come literally across the continent to participate on this Czech gathering in Ottawa.

The Czech Republic is a small country, but full of marvelous people.

We truly have a lot to be proud of and something to boast about in the world.

Each of you is in a way an ambassador of the Czech Republic in Canada and I would like to thank you for that!