



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic

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JUDr. Jiří KRÁTKÝ, M.A.
Special Envoy for Compatriot Affairs

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Dear Mr. Ambassador, dear compatriots, dear friends,

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, I would like to extend a cordial greeting to you on the occasion of the Congress of Compatriots in Ottawa. It is an honour to reach out to you from Prague right here, in Canada, where the Czech community has long been one of the most active and engaged.

I see Ottawa itself as one of the centers of compatriot life, where the teaching of Czech has become a natural part of community life in recent years. There are five expatriate schools in Canada, or branches of the Czech School of CSSK in Ottawa, Vancouver, Montreal, a school under the Masaryk Institute in Toronto and the Czech School Foundation in Calgary, which, with the financial contribution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are dedicated to teaching Czech language and culture. Their work is extremely valuable – not only for Czech children, who learn the language of their ancestors thanks to them, but also for the entire community, which creates a lively and inspiring environment around these schools.

Let me also thank you, compatriots, for your active participation in the postal vote. Your involvement in democratic processes is proof of a strong bond with the Czech Republic and confirmation that it is possible to be civically engaged and responsible even from a distance. I am aware that the postal voting was disrupted by the Canadian Post strike and that it could have made it more difficult for some of you to participate in the historically first remote voting. Nevertheless, I would like to assure you that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through our embassy headed by Ambassador Martin Tlapa, has taken all possible steps in negotiations with the Canadian side in order to deliver as many of your correspondence votes as possible. That is why I would like to thank Ambassador Martin Tlapa, Consul General Radek Machů and both teams of the Czech diplomatic representation in Canada for the organization of the elections.

In recent years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has noticed how dynamically the character of Czech compatriots has changed. The generation of classic exiles – forty-eighters and sixty-eighters – is gradually being replaced by modern compatriots who have already left the free Czech Republic for study, work, science, art, or because of family ties. These compatriots logically concentrate their activities mainly on the education of their children, often already born abroad, where the teaching of Czech language and Czech life becomes the basic focus of compatriot life. Around Czech schools abroad, there is an active and creative compatriot life, which also supports what the previous regime almost took away from us – freedom and

national pride. And I appreciate that immensely. Here in Canada, I very much appreciate particularly the fact that the interest in passing on the culture and history of the Czech state to new generations is enormous and growing again. In Canada, expatriate associations are not disappearing, on the contrary, new ones are being added and thus contributing to the diversity of Czech community. I very much appreciate how you want and are able to maintain and actively develop the cultural heritage brought here by the aforementioned waves of exile. I cannot fail to mention the recently deceased Zdena Salivarová (Škvorecká), who was one of the pillars of the compatriot community and will undoubtedly remain so for all of us.

For me, the essence and main goal of compatriot policy is that our compatriots help to actively connect and maintain a strong bond with their homeland – through their work contacts, achievements in the field of science, culture and economy. Thanks to them, the Czech voice is heard in the world. This is evidenced by the awards given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs „Gratias agit“, which commemorate important personalities who spread the good name of the Czech Republic abroad. That is why I was very pleased that in 2025 Pavel Jelen from Canada received the „Gratias agit“ award for spreading the good name of the Czech Republic abroad. He is an important Czech compatriot who is an internationally recognized expert in the field of agrotechnology. His professional achievements and long-term support of Czech expertise abroad have been recognized as exemplary activities that contribute to the positive image of the Czech Republic in the world.

Thank you for everything you do to maintain the Czech language, culture and identity, as well as the good name of our country in Canada. Your work has a deep meaning and is irreplaceable for our country. I wish you an inspiring Congress, new stimuli and, above all, the joy of sharing the Czech tradition together in the modern world.

Yours sincerely,

Jiří Krátký

(this text is a working translation of the Czech original attached)