

Finland in Canada: From 1920s Consular Relations to Modern Diversified Cooperation of 2017

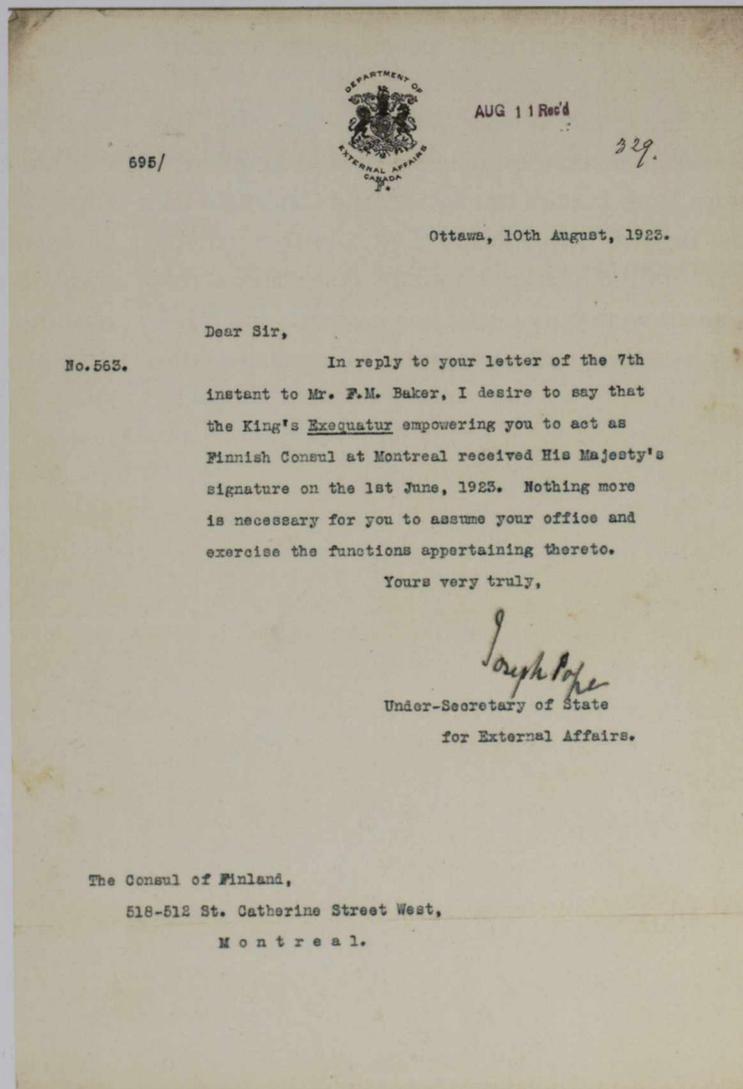
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Consular relations were first established between Finland and Canada in 1923, when Finland opened a consular office in Montréal. Other Nordic countries had their consulates in Montréal, so it was an obvious choice for Finland as well. The consular office's core task was to assist Finnish immigrants in Canada. This was reflected in the choice of consul: Mr. Akseli Rauanheimo, who was well acquainted with immigrant issues, was appointed as the first Finnish consul on January 23, 1923. In 1925, the consular office was upgraded to a consulate general.

The consulate services were in much demand at the height of the Finnish immigration wave to Canada. Following restrictions in the American immigration legislation in 1922, the annual numbers of Finnish immigrants arriving to Canada jumped. Between 1922 and 1930 almost 35,000 Finns immigrated to Canada, most with no knowledge of English or French. Assisting the immigrants included all kinds of tasks from passport and legal issues to translation tasks and responding to inquiries from concerned relatives. The consulate also took care of delivering mail from Finland to the migrants, handling more than a thousand letters on particularly busy weeks.

During the first years, Mr. Rauanheimo ran the consular office together with his wife. They had their hands full and clearly needed more personnel. In the late 1920s

more resources were allocated for the consulate, and the number of people working there grew from two to six. New staff included a vice-consul, two clerks, and an errand girl. In the 1930s the flow of Finnish immigrants to Canada slowed down. This was both due to Canada's tightened immigration policy and the fact that fewer Finns



Correspondence confirming Akseli Rauanheimo as the first Finnish Consul in Canada. Located in Montréal, Rauanheimo served from 1923-1932. This letter was signed by Canada's first under-secretary of state for external affairs, Sir Joseph Pope. F.M. Baker, referenced in the letter, was the chief clerk of the department. Photo: Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.