

Foreword

by **Margaret MacMillan**

Friends and Neighbours.

From one perspective Canada and Finland seem very far away, an ocean apart. From another however they are close neighbours, across the North Pole. Both countries have taken the lead in Arctic cooperation and are staunch members of the Arctic Council. Canada has recently served as its chair while Finland is about to take over that position. We understand well the threats and opportunities presented by climate change, the need to manage our resources with care, and to work constructively with our aboriginal peoples.

Our two nations have much else in common beyond their geography and their climates. We have significant linguistic minorities, in Canada's case the French and in Finland, the Swedish, and we have worked with considerable success to accommodate and protect those. We are small powers next door to much bigger ones and, of necessity, manage our relationships with them carefully and skilfully. The Finns know what it is to live with Russia. Whether that great power has been under Tsars, Communists, or today President Putin, it has always posed a challenge to Finnish identity that must be met.

Canada has had to live with the United States; the elder Trudeau once compared it to being in bed with an elephant. Canadians too have worried about their identity and culture being submerged in that of the great power on their borders. And just as the Finns often find themselves trying to explain Russia to Europe and vice versa, so do Canadians with the United States and the rest of the world.

As peoples we both like the out-of-doors. Whenever we can, we go to cottages in the woods or by the water. We greet the first snowfalls of the winter with grumbling but, if we are to be honest, excitement. We learn to skate when we are young and many of us play hockey and ski. We are Northern peoples, cautious, reserved and frugal, and rightly apprehensive about what nature might throw at us next. We like informality, in our leaders too, and we are suspicious of those who seem to be getting above themselves. In Canada we talk disapprovingly of the Tall Poppy syndrome. There is probably a Finnish equivalent.

The links between us, of people and trade, go back many years. Thousands of Finnish farmers and loggers immigrated to Canada in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After the First World War many Finns brought their politics, both right and left, with them to enliven the Canadian scene. In the 1930s Canadian Finns made up one of the largest national groups in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, which fought in the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. Today Finnish migrants to Canada are more likely to be scientists or hockey players or musicians. Nearly 140,000 Canadians claim Finnish ancestry and range from a famous actress – Pamela Anderson – to the politician Judy Erola.

Canada has benefitted too from the best of Finnish design. We in Canada were delighted and surprised in the 1960s when Canadian stores started to carry Finnish fabrics, household wares, and furniture.