

Major-General  
Georges P. Vanier,  
Minister to the Greek  
government-in-exile  
who later served as  
Canada's Governor  
General (1959-1967)



November 1942, Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King appointed one of Canada's most senior diplomats and future Governor General, Major-General Georges Vanier, Minister to the Greek government-in-exile.

Canadians rallied to Greece's side during the Second World War. Communities across the country backed the Greek War Relief Fund and sent a stream of supplies through the Canadian Red Cross. In 1942, the Canadian government began shipping 15,000 tons of wheat monthly through neutral Sweden to stave off starvation in occupied Greece.<sup>4</sup> Canada's support for the suffering Greek population was underpinned by Prime Minister Mackenzie King's romantic view of Greek heroism.

When Greek King George II visited Canada in July 1942 with Prime Minister Emmanouil Tsouderos at his side, the Canadian leader praised him lavishly for his bravery, thanking him for "resisting Hitler in the Old World".<sup>5</sup> By the end of the war, over \$3 million worth of Canadian aid had poured into Athens. The trans-Atlantic link between the two countries was further strengthened when Canada returned the new Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou and his government-in-exile to their native land aboard the HMCS Prince David, landing them at the port of Piraeus in October of 1944 to a tremendous welcome. Canada's aid to Greece during the Second World War would not be forgotten.

The postwar relationship was closer still. During the summer of 1945, the two countries raised the status of their diplomatic missions to full-fledged embassies. King asked Major-General L.R. Laflèche to head the new Canadian mission. Laflèche was a strong appointment. A French-Canadian veteran of the First World War and a skilled administrator, Laflèche had joined King's wartime cabinet when the prime minister most needed help in Quebec, and he enjoyed his confidence. King paid close attention to