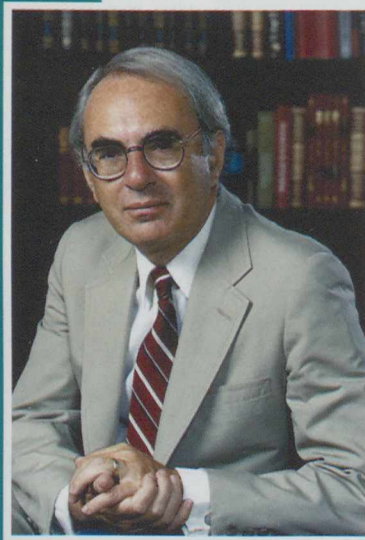


SPEAKING FOR CANADA

The job of representing Canada in the seat of the American Empire is unequalled in its demands—and rewards.

They hold arguably the most influential position in Canada's Foreign Service, stewards of one of the world's most important and enduring bilateral relationships.

Occupying a position between the dominant power on the planet and the top political power in Canada, Canadian envoys to Washington work gruelling hours, manage hundreds of files, navigate corridors of clout and engage in a social whirl that makes the job equally demanding of their spouses. And they wouldn't have it any other way.



Former ambassador Alan Gotlieb: A neutral meeting ground.

"Nowhere are Canadian interests more profoundly more profoundly at stake. Nowhere are the issues vital to Canada more in play," says Michael Kergin, Canada's Ambassador to the U.S. since 2000. "To be part of the action in Washington on a daily basis is for me an exceptional honour and an awesome responsibility."

Most of Canada's representatives to Washington, including Mr. Kergin, come from the ranks of senior mandarins and long-time diplomatic and political masters. Yet they say the position is unequalled in the need to "hit the ground running," with a wide-ranging curiosity and a deep

understanding of international affairs, the full confidence of the Canadian government and the ability to establish relationships of trust with key centres of power in the capital.

"Very early on you realize that the Canada-U.S. relationship overwhelms all others in importance," says Raymond Chrétien, ambassador through much of the two Clinton administrations. "It's more true now than it was in the past."

Indeed, Alan Gotlieb, Canada's longest-serving ambassador through much of the 1980s, says that when he joined the Foreign Service in 1954, the U.S. division at the Department of External Affairs consisted of just two people. "They dealt with cross-border bridges and tunnels, that was basically it."

Most notably in the early days, the post was limited to dealings with the Executive Branch carried out behind closed doors; diplomats weren't welcome on Capitol Hill. Lester B. Pearson wrote in his memoirs of speaking out on issues as ambassador and being "gently rapped over the knuckles" by State Department officials concerned "that a diplomat should deal only with them, not directly with Congress or the press, and only prudently and blandly with the public."

Starting in the post-Watergate era, with the power of the President challenged by Congress, Mr. Gotlieb and his successors came to practise a new diplomacy. The focus of their dealings came to include Congress, its committees and members, other government

departments and agencies, special interest groups, the media, lobbyists and the public.

Geography today plays no small part in this practice. The Canadian mission, opened in 1989, is positioned directly in front of Capitol Hill, making it convenient for contacts to "walk over for meetings or lunches or social events," Mr. Kergin says.

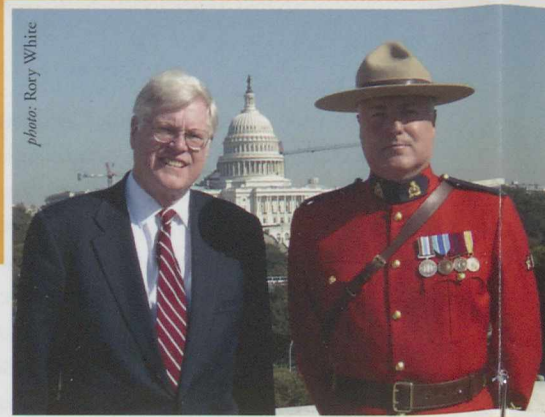
A new secretariat is being set up in the Embassy to better represent Canada's interests at the provincial and parliamentary level, and to present a common Canadian position in dealing with Congress, the states, interest groups and the public.

Getting noticed in Washington is a complex task. Without the ability to deliver votes or contribute money, a foreign power needs to appeal to U.S. interests and to ally itself with American special interest groups in the lobbying effort.

Developing alliances is especially critical for the head of post.

"There are 160 ambassadors in Washington and they all want attention of some kind," says Derek Burney, who represented Canada in Washington during the term of George Bush Sr. "You only get positive attention if you can get access to the people who make the decisions."

For Mr. Chrétien, being an ambassador meant "being a bit more daring. You have to take chances; you have to not be afraid to talk about controversial



Ambassador Michael Kergin stands with a Mountie on the 6th floor terrace of the Embassy in the shadow of Capitol Hill.



Former ambassador Raymond Chrétien with former president Bill Clinton: "The Canada-U.S. relationship overwhelms all others."



Former ambassador Derek Burney with then chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Colin Powell.

issues. Otherwise, you don't exist and you'll not become a player."

Much of such interaction takes place in social settings well beyond office hours. "Washington's the only place where you would die to be invited to 20 or 30 dinner parties a night," Mr. Gotlieb remembers. "It's a place of endless fascination, if you are able to make the contacts and get the access and participate."

Mr. Gotlieb was best known for making the Canadian embassy a "neutral meeting ground" for an eclectic and influential mix of players from all parts of Washington: Republicans and Democrats, Cabinet secretaries and labour leaders, popular cultural icons and intellectuals. "We were able to play a unique role, for a time, although when we arrived in Washington we didn't know anybody," says Mr. Gotlieb, whose wife Sondra played a central role as well.

Indeed, the involvement of spouses is critical to diplomatic success in the city. "Washington operates very much in pairs," says Mr. Kergin, who met his wife Margarita in Washington in 1972, when he was on his first diplomatic assignment there. Mrs. Kergin is currently president of one of the high-powered clubs that bring together the spouses of those involved in politics, the media, diplomacy and other endeavours in the city.

Getting "beyond the Beltway" is also critical, says Mr. Chrétien.

"You're not Ambassador to Washington; you're Ambassador to the U.S., and you have to travel the country."

Leaving Washington behind in the end is hard, say the former envoys, who have moved on to prominent positions in law and business in Canada and lent their weight to boards, foundations and positions in academe. They watch as renewed administrations in Ottawa and Washington seek common ground, and they reflect on the diplomatic challenges ahead amid trade disputes, diverging personal values, shared interests such as security and political differences between the two countries.

Finding a way forward in the relationship is critical for Canada, they say, giving the country leverage for our interests internationally—as well as easing the job for our representative in the capital. "Managing our relationship with the United States in a civil and proper fashion will help us have influence on a larger world stage," says Mr. Burney.

"If we want to influence outcomes, then we have to be able to influence Washington," echoes Mr. Gotlieb. "The ambassador has great potential in that." 🍁

Learn more about Canada's mission in Washington at www.canadianembassy.org.



Our men in Washington

There have been 20 Canadian representatives in Washington. Among the early envoys were some of the venerable figures of Canada's independent Foreign Service, as the country opened to the world and found a voice with its nearest neighbour. More recent heads of mission have negotiated Washington's changing landscape and shifting power centres, an increased focus on public diplomacy and ever-more complex bilateral relations.

- 1927 – 1930 Vincent Massey
- 1931 – 1935 William Herridge
- 1936 – 1939 Sir Herbert Marler
- 1939 – 1941 Loring Christie
- 1941 – 1944 Leighton McCarthy
- 1944 – 1946 Lester B. Pearson
- 1946 – 1953 Hume Wrong
- 1953 – 1957 Arnold Heeney
- 1957 – 1958 Norman Robertson
- 1959 – 1962 Arnold Heeney
- 1962 – 1966 Charles Ritchie
- 1966 – 1970 Ed Ritchie
- 1970 – 1975 Marcel Cadieux
- 1975 – 1977 Jake Warren
- 1977 – 1981 Peter Towe
- 1981 – 1989 Allan Gotlieb
- 1989 – 1993 Derek Burney
- 1993 – 1994 John de Chastelain
- 1994 – 2000 Raymond Chrétien
- 2000 – 2005 Michael Kergin
- 2005 – Frank McKenna (Ambassador designate)