



PRESS RELEASE

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January 20, 1948.

The Department of External Affairs announced that Mr. Thor Thors presented today, to His Excellency The Governor General, at Government House, his Letter of Credence as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Iceland in Canada.

The Right Honourable L. S. St. Laurent, P.C., M.P., Secretary of State for External Affairs, was present.

Mr. Thors was presented to His Excellency The Governor General by Mr. Howard Measures, Chief of Protocol, Department of External Affairs.

Mr. Thors was a Member of the Icelandic Parliament from 1933 to 1941. He was appointed Consul General of Iceland in New York in August 1940, and since 1941, has been Minister of Iceland in Washington. He has represented Iceland at a number of international conferences.

On the occasion of the presentation of his Letter of Credence to His Excellency the Governor General, Mr. Thor Thors, Minister of Iceland issued the following statement:

Canada and Iceland are closely related through bonds of kinship, common history and friendship. One of the many tokens thereof is the exchange of diplomatic representatives between the two nations for the first time.

I am deeply aware of the great honour and privilege accorded to me to have been appointed Iceland's first Minister in Canada and it will give me the greatest happiness to endeavour to further and cement the understanding and friendly relations between our two peoples, which have always existed and have steadily become more explicit.

Iceland is proud to recall the historic fact that it was Leifr Eiriksson, who was born and brought up in Iceland, who discovered the great mainland of America and, first of all white men, set foot on American soil in the year 1000. Furthermore, it was the Icелander Thorfinnur Karlsefni who established the first European settlement in North America in the years 1003 to 1006. These are facts which originally bound together the history of Canada and the history of Iceland.

However, there are many other and closer common bonds.

The Canadian nation has gained its complete sovereignty and independence, not through the strength of arms, but through wise leadership and perseverance under the banners of democracy. The Republic of Iceland owes its independence to its able leaders of old and late and its thousand years old Parliament. Thus the bonds of democracy are our common heritage and so is the love of freedom and longing for independence.

Iceland is a small nation. Life has often been hard and through the centuries we have had to fight against heavy odds and merciless forces of nature and the outlook has sometimes been desperate during times of depression and darkness.

Iceland has had little to give to other nations. It must therefore be a matter for excuse if we pride ourselves that to Canada, more than to any other nation in the world, have we given what to us has meant a great sacrifice and at the same time been a source of great pride. Iceland has given Canada many good citizens. The Icelandic nation is grateful that in Canada they have found their happy homes and that they have succeeded in contributing to the general welfare of their fellow countrymen in the new land. The tens of thousands of people of Icelandic descent in Canada have proven to be loyal citizens of their adopted country. They have gained the respect of their fellow countrymen and at all times and in every walk of life have they been true to the finest traditions and best qualities of their mother nation.

But not only have we given. We have been recipients of great favours of true friendship from the people of Canada, not solely those of Icelandic descent, but all the people of Canada and from their Governments at all times. It suffices to mention that three Governors General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, Lord Tweedsmuir and the Earl of Athlone, have all made special visits to the Icelanders in Canada and rendered high tribute to them. The people of Iceland are thankful to the Canadian nation for the opportunities granted our kinfolk in this great country of past successes and bright future. We are happy to know that the

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people of Icelandic descent in Canada will always hold their old country in love and reverence.

Canada is not an old country. The Canadian nation is young and constantly rising among the nations of the world. It has been my privilege to observe at many international conferences how highly appreciated is the voice of Canada, how fortunate is its influence and wise its leadership on every occasion.

Canada is the country of the future. Its great possibilities, its rich resources and its able, hard-working and intelligent people afford Canada security of prosperity and happiness in times to come.

It is the fervent hope of my Government and of the people of Iceland that Canada's constantly increasing influence on world affairs will largely help to ensure peace and security for all the peoples of the world.

As I begin my mission in Canada, I wish to express my conviction that I shall always meet with friendly assistance and the greatest goodwill for the accomplishment of a task which is particularly pleasant to me and by which I am deeply honoured.