
Opening Remarks by H. E. Ms. Isabelle Poupart, Ambassador of Canada to Hungary

On behalf of the Embassy of Canada, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Faculty of Law at Eötvös Loránd University and the organizers of this important symposium for the positive recognition that it gives to the 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation. I would also like to convey my appreciation to Professor Jeremy Webber, Dean of the Law School of the University of Victoria, who agreed to share his thoughts on Canada's constitutional experience with this distinguished audience.

While we are here to discuss the development of Canada's constitutional democracy, I find that it is equally important to focus on what Canada and countries in Central and Eastern Europe can learn from each other's experiences, rather than concentrating on what this region can learn from Canada alone. Given my legal training, it will come as no surprise that I am personally interested in learning about how the legal and constitutional systems in Canada, Hungary and the broader region have been shaped through the centuries. Comparative law has always been one of my favourite disciplines.

Canada took on its modern constitutional form on July 1, 1867, when the British North America Act, a piece of legislation passed in the British Parliament, came into force and united the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec, to form the Dominion of Canada. Ottawa became the capital, and Sir John A. Macdonald became the Dominion's first prime minister. This was the birth of Canada, my country. More than a century later, the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which transferred the power to amend the Constitution from Great Britain to Canada, was adopted.

I am sure that many of you will agree with me when I say that the topic of this symposium is incredibly relevant in today's world, given that constitutions are central to the healthy functioning of liberal democracies and the rule of law. Genuine democracy cannot operate without the rule of law; it requires a parliament that is elected directly by voters and a judicial system independent of political control. Liberal democracies stay strong by upholding their constitutions and the system of checks and balances that they include, while constantly seeking to improve through economic, social and cultural progress that benefits their citizens.

For Canadians, in this important anniversary year, our Constitution is also of direct relevance when one considers the four themes that our government has chosen to highlight for Canada 150: promoting a diverse and inclusive Canada; reaffirming the importance of strong environmental stewardship; engaging and inspiring youth; and supporting efforts towards national reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. These

are the themes the Embassy will be highlighting through the year and I am glad to see them reflected, in one form or another, in today's proceedings.

I take this opportunity to thank all the students and professors who are present here today for your time, your dedication and your interest in Canada. Academic study of Canada, efforts to explore who we are (or who we think we are), what we do and how we do it are extremely valuable, including through a comparative lens. The work that you undertake is greatly appreciated and genuinely contributes to a better understanding of Canada around the globe as well as our own understanding of how we can better cooperate with our friends and partners.

To all of you, I wish you the very best with this symposium and your future legal studies or research. As you keep up your interest in Canada, please count on the Embassy's support.

Thank you, merci, köszönöm!