

"We are both, Estonia and Canada, driven by the same ambition expressed in the motto of the Order of Canada – *Desiderantes meliorem patriam*. Desiring a better country," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, the first Estonian Head of State to arrive in Canada on an official state visit, yesterday at an official welcoming ceremony in Ottawa.

"Geographical distance has never dissuaded us. As NATO allies and supporters of a strong Trans-Atlantic bridge, Estonia and Canada are close and responsible partners in the complex world of the 21st century," said President Ilves, in addressing the Governor General of Canada, David Johnston.

"Co-operation in the sphere of education and especially information technology, common experiences on the battlefield in the most dangerous parts of Afghanistan in the NATO-led operation and support for strong economic and political relations between Canada and the European Union – these are only a few of the important areas that characterise the similarity of our thinking, and more importantly, acting," told the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves also recalled his personal memories of Canada, where he spent a number of summers as a child in Jõekäärü Children's Camp, Ontario, and later lived for four years in Vancouver, where he taught Estonian language at Simon Fraser University, saying: "Twenty years ago, right here at Rideau Hall, I presented my credentials as the first Estonian ambassador to Canada. At that time, neither Estonia nor Canada could foresee what would come to pass; Russian troops were still stationed against our will on Estonian soil, NATO expansion was a pipedream for all of the newly liberated democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Yet one thing was clear: Estonia and Canada would become good friends. This is exactly what has happened."

The Estonian Head of State thanked Canada for its support for NATO enlargement at yesterday's state dinner, given by Governor General Johnston, as Ottawa was the first to ratify Estonia's accession to the Alliance and to support the Baltic air security mission.

President Ilves referred to Canada as the Scandinavia of Northern America: "Scandinavia as a concept, which unites various countries of Northern Europe, means confidence, it means friendliness and consideration for others, the supremacy of human rights, keeping one's word, calm deliberation, and sticking by decisions once they have been made or agreed to. In a word,

everything good and positive that Estonia has experienced in our relations with Canada."

The Estonian Head of State, who was welcomed at the residence of the Governor General by members of the local Estonian community, described Canada as a special country for families on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, as Canada and Canadians reached out a helping hand to many Estonians who were escaping from the communist terror. They and their children grew up to become successful Canadians who have still preserved a piece of Estonia.

"A parts of Estonia are scattered all across Canada," admitted President Ilves, who also acknowledged the Canadian Estonians who returned to Estonia after 1991 and are now working as successful diplomats, in other fields of public service, culture or business. "From a lengthy canon of names, some that pop into mind are the Laanemäes, Sillastes, Kasekamps, the Klaars, and countless others whose contribution has been equally great. Most recently, Ardo Hansson became President of the Estonian Central Bank."

The Estonian Head of State recalled that two of our prime ministers – Tiit Vähi and Andrus Ansip – studied economics in Canada and emphasised that the two-way positive contribution to each other's society is worth continuing. One of the examples is the co-operation between Tartu and Toronto and between the Estonian Academy of Arts and Emily Carr University, as well as the partnership between Tallinn University of Technology and Waterloo University.

The main purpose of the state visit of President Ilves is to strengthen bilateral political and economic relations between Estonia and Canada and to confirm the importance of Trans-Atlantic co-operation.

The Estonian Head of State will meet in Ottawa with the Governor General of Canada, David Johnston; leaders of the Canadian Parliament, Noël A. Kinsella, Andrew Scheer and Peter Van Loan; and the Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

In Toronto, President Ilves will speak about the future vision of the European Union at an influential economic forum, Economic Club of Canada; he will also meet with members of the Estonian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce and Estonian entrepreneurs in Canada. He will visit the IT-centred Waterloo/Kitchener technological region and the Canadian Centre of Innovation, Communitech, where he will give a public presentation on e-governance and cyber security

issues. Representatives of Tallinn University of Technology and Waterloo University will sign a memorandum of co-operation there, and Estonian entrepreneurs will meet their business partners.

President Ilves will meet the local Estonian community at the Estonian House in Toronto. On 4 May, the Day of Civil Action, which has acquired an international dimension, the Estonian Head of State and Evelin Ilves will participate in "Let's Do It" 2013 by cleaning up the Jõekäärü Youth Camp, which Toomas Hendrik Ilves himself attended as a child.

Evelin Ilves will visit Ottawa Children's Hospital, CHEO, where mentally ill children are also treated, and the participation of parents in their child's hospital routine is considered important. In Toronto, Evelin Ilves will visit the retirement and nursing home, Ehatare, for elderly Estonians.

The following people are included in the official delegation that is accompanying the President of the Republic: the Minister of Education and Research, Jaak Aaviksoo; the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Rein Lang; members of the Riigikogu, Liisa Pakosta and Imre Sooäär; Secretary General of the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Paavo Nõgene; Undersecretary for Europe and Transatlantic Co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mart Laanemäe, Vice Rector for Research of Tallinn University of Technology, Erkki Truve and the leader of Cyber Security Programme, Marko Kääramees, member of the Management Board of Cybernetica AS, Aivar Usk; Manager of NOW! Innovations Üllar Jaaksoo.

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