

Welcome to the

# EMBASSY OF CANADA



501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington DC  
202-682-1740 | [connect2canada.com](http://connect2canada.com)

# About Us

The Embassy is one of over 175 Canadian diplomatic missions around the world. In addition to the Embassy, our presence in the United States includes 12 Consulates General, the largest Canadian footprint in any one country. We have representatives from a dozen federal government departments, including a number of military personnel, two provinces — Ontario and Alberta — and also host the Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States. We are the only Embassy between Capitol Hill and the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue.

## Our History

Canada has had independent representation in the United States since 1927. The Embassy of Canada has been in its current location on Pennsylvania Avenue, however, only since 1989. Having outgrown an earlier chancery on Massachusetts Avenue, the Government of Canada purchased the lot on Pennsylvania Avenue in 1978 from the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation for \$4.5 million (around \$19 million in today's dollars, adjusting for inflation) at the urging of Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The building was opened in 1989 by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Secretary of State James Baker III.



# The Architecture

The building itself was designed by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson (1924–2009), who was the first Canadian to ever win the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects. Erickson imported most of the building's materials from Canada and noted he wanted the design to express "an image of Canadian reserve, and good manners, coupled with a characteristic gesture of openness and invitation." The Embassy also pays homage to neighboring buildings, including I.M. Pei's modern East Wing of the National Gallery of Art.



## **The Rotunda of the Provinces and Territories**

Twelve pillars featuring crests of Canada's provinces and territories hold up the domed roof at the southeast corner of our courtyard. The seal above the entrance to the rotunda is for Nunavut, which became a territory in 1999.

## **The Columns**

To conform to Washington's strict neo-classical guidelines, Erickson added six hollow columns, made of imported Canadian aluminum, supporting a sky light.



## The Spirit of Haida Gwaii

Canadian artist Bill Reid (1920–1998) created *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* specifically for the Embassy's courtyard. The Haida are Indigenous peoples from the Haida Gwaii Islands, located off the coast of British Columbia. The sculpture is made of blackened bronze and features 13 figures from Haida mythology rowing in a traditional dugout canoe.

The 11,000-pound sculpture (about the weight of three mid-size cars) was lifted into its position in the courtyard by crane after the building was completed. It was unveiled in 1991.

From 2004–2012, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* was featured on Canada's \$20 bill.

## Greening Initiatives

In 2019, the Embassy of Canada was awarded the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification — the highest rating within the LEED rating system. We are one of only two Embassies in the United States with this distinction. The building's electricity is 100% renewable. We also have a butterfly garden and a herb garden on our rooftop.

# You May Not Know

## **You are not on Canadian soil.**

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), states that while the “premises of the mission shall be inviolable,” it is still considered U.S. territory. The Embassy cannot be entered by the host country without permission, and the host must protect it against intrusion and damage. You may notice the U.S. Secret Service Uniform Division performing these very duties.

## **Have you heard of the Canadian Caper?**

Popularized in the film *Argo*, Canadian diplomats gave sanctuary to and smuggled U.S. diplomats out of Iran in 1979. A persistent rumor is that the U.S. government gave Canada the land we are on as a gift for our involvement. However, the Canadian Government purchased the lot in 1978, a year earlier.

## **Did Niagara Falls inspire the rotunda's water feature?**

Although Arthur Erickson frequently integrated water and nature into his architecture, it is not clear if Niagara Falls were the inspiration for the water feature around the rotunda. That said, according to Erickson, the large pool in the courtyard symbolizes Canada's “ocean limits.”



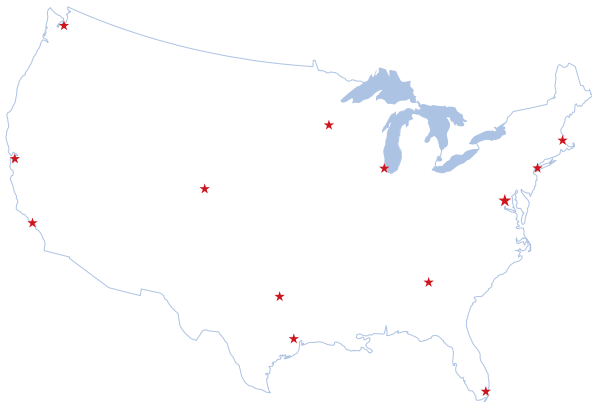
# Canada's Network in the U.S.

The Embassy is part of a network of Canadian diplomatic missions in the U.S.

We work to make Canadians and Americans safer and more prosperous.

The **Consulates General** are based in:

- ★ Atlanta
- ★ Boston
- ★ Chicago
- ★ Dallas
- ★ Denver
- ★ Detroit
- ★ Los Angeles
- ★ Miami
- ★ Minneapolis
- ★ New York
- ★ San Francisco
- ★ Seattle



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