



# SLCBC NEWSLETTER

Published by Sri Lanka Canada Business Council of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce Vol. 01, Issue 01

The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce : 50, Navam Mawatha, Colombo 02. <http://www.srilankacanadabiz.lk/>

## MESSAGE FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF CANADA



As patron of the Sri Lanka Canada Business Council, it is my pleasure to pen the opening message for the first edition of the Business Council newsletter. Let me first extend my best wishes to the new SLCBC Executive Committee, which was appointed at the 29th Annual General Meeting in September 2020.

Sri Lanka is blessed with abundant natural assets, an educated and resilient population, strategic location in the Indian Ocean, and strong links with the region and the world, including Canada. These unprecedented times provide an opportunity to strengthen the country's policy frameworks and governance, drawing on Sri Lanka's long democratic traditions, to position the country for post-COVID growth. This will encourage the vibrant private sector that is crucial for economic success, while signalling to the world that this remarkable country is open for business, both trade and investment.

As the Business Council fulfills its mandate in advancing the trade and investment relationships between Canada and Sri Lanka, we at the High Commission of Canada look forward to continuing our long partnership with the SLCBC. I also encourage the Council membership and wider business community to work closely with the Government of Sri Lanka agencies, both in Sri Lanka and in Canada, tasked with promoting Sri Lankan exports to Canada. Their work complements that of the High Commission and the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service.

Our two countries enjoy a proud and diverse relationship, which began well before independence and continues to grow stronger today in many businesses in diverse sectors, creating jobs for thousands of Sri Lankans and contributing to economic growth. Long may this continue and prosper.

I can assure you of Canada's continued support as a partner to Sri Lanka on its path to sustainable peace, security, and prosperity.

**David McKinnon,**  
*High Commissioner of Canada to Sri Lanka  
and Maldives/ Haut-commissaire du Canada  
au Sri Lanka et aux*

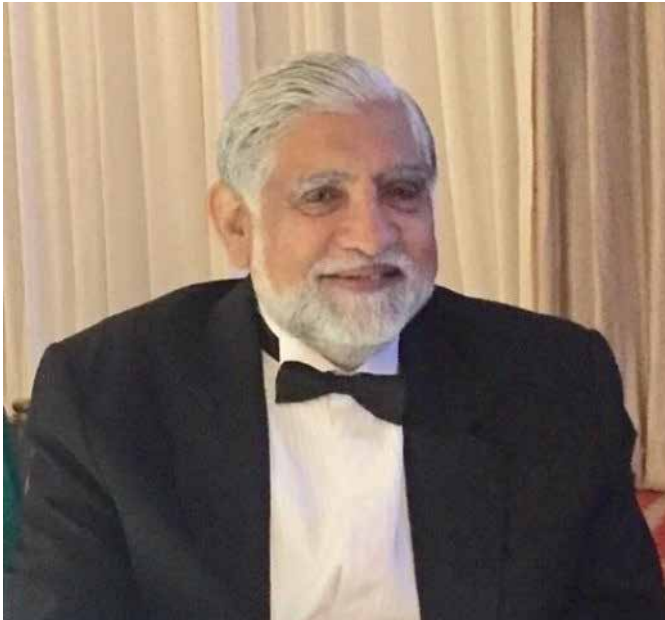


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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is an honour to take over the leadership of the Sri Lanka -Canada Business Council for 2020/21, and continue the legacy left behind by my illustrious predecessors. Our Council has made tremendous progress since its inauguration in 1991, and we are proud to function under the aegis of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. It is a pleasure to post my opening message that will be carried in the Newsletter (Vol 1 Issue 1), published by SLCBC.

The Sri Lanka-Canada Business Council (SLCBC) was formed in 1991 in Colombo under the dynamic leadership of the inaugural President - Mr. Hemaka Amarasuriya – Chairman/CEO of Singer Sri Lanka. We shall be working cohesively with our counterpart organization in Canada - the Canada-Sri Lanka Business Council in promoting Sri Lanka in Canada and vice versa. It has been a productive alliance and we look forward to continuing our journey forward with greater momentum with the new government of Sri Lanka.

The Toronto-Based Canada-Sri Lanka Business Council (CSLBC) was formed in 1990, to promote bilateral trade, investment, tourism, technology transfer and industrial cooperation between Canada & Sri Lanka. The Council was formed 30 years ago by a Core Group of Canadian Businessmen led by Sir Christopher Ondaatje working in concurrence with the Sri Lanka High Commission in Canada. In my address to the membership earlier, I spoke of the historical link and the close political, commercial and socio-cultural ties between the two Countries. Sri Lanka and Canada enjoy a consolidated economic relationship that has resulted in an increased flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Canada Business Council has contributed in large measure to this economic growth acting as a catalyst and we will continue to put our best foot forward to improve bilateral trade and investment in both jurisdictions.

### Council Objectives;

- To promote bilateral trade & investment activities between Sri Lanka & Canada.
- To provide networking opportunity to SLCBC members to build productive business relationships in Sri Lanka and with Canadian partners.
- To provide advocacy/services to the Sri Lankan business community interested in doing business with Canada.

I assure you ladies and gentlemen, that the Council, will build on the good work done in the past and position the Council to play a significant role in the development of Trade and Investment between Sri Lanka and Canada in the years ahead. I look forward to enjoy working with membership for the future growth of the Council

**Thank you | Rajah Abeyesinghe**



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## 29TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SRI LANKA CANADA BUSINESS COUNCIL

The 29th Annual General Meeting of the Sri Lanka – Canada Business Council (SLCBC) of The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce was held recently at Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. The Chief Guest of the event was the High Commissioner for Canada, David McKinnon, who is also the Patron of the Council. Mr. Rajah Abeyasinghe, CEO, Hydromec International (Pvt) Ltd was elected as the President of the Council for the year 2020/2021. In his address Mr. Abeyasinghe mentioned that “over the last 29 years, the SLSBC has seen a continuous growth under the leadership of successive Presidents along with the respective management committees. With the renewed development agenda between our two countries, our council will have to play an important role by lobbying the Sri Lankan government to create an inclusive environment to increase bilateral trade and investment between Canada and Sri Lanka, as well as create the required awareness of the



market opportunities that exist for Sri Lankan firms.” The High Commissioner for Canada, David McKinnon, stated that “Canada has been a long term partner of Sri Lanka with Canadians and Canadian owned companies responsible for creating jobs for thousands of Sri Lankans and contributing to economic prosperity. Despite the setbacks of the pandemic and the tragic Easter attacks of 2019, the fundamental strengths of Sri Lanka remain—an educated and resilient population, strong relationships with countries in South Asia and the wider region, fantastic natural attributes and a strategic location astride major trade routes in the fastest growing region in the world. If Sri Lanka remains outward looking and open to trade and investment, there are exciting opportunities emerging here and an appetite among Canadian firms to be a part of it.” Mr. Priyantha Padmasiri and Mr. Ong Jhon Seon were elected as Vice Presidents while Mr. Lionel Silva serves as the Immediate Past President. Abans PLC, Ceyline Shipping Ltd, MAC Holdings, Mclarens Holdings Ltd, Samsons Rubber Products (Pvt) Ltd were elected from the membership to serve on the Executive Committee of the Council.



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**Seated from L-R:** Mr. Priyantha Chandrasekera, Vice President; Mr. Rajah Abeysinghe, President; David McKinnon, High Commissioner for Canada in Sri Lanka; Mr. Lionel D C Silva, Immediate Past President; Mr. Ong Jhon Seon, Vice President and Ms. Dinithi Dias, Manager, Business Councils.

**Standing from L-R:** Ms. Avanti Coonghe, Trade Commissioner; Dr. (Mrs.) Saroshi Dubash, Abans PLC; Mr. Mahesh Kurukulasuriya, McLaren Holdings Ltd; Mr. Sajith Rajapaksa, Samson Rubber Products (Pvt) Ltd; Mr. Gayan Maddumarachchi, MAC Holdings (Pvt) Ltd; Mr. Gayan Gunawardena, Ceyline Shipping Ltd.

**Not in the Picture:** Mr. Harith Jayasuriya, MAC Holdings (Pvt) Ltd



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## CANADA HOUSE, THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SRI LANKA

Canada House, located at 254 Bauddhaloka Mawatha in Cinnamon Gardens, Colombo 7 is one of two imposing properties in Colombo owned by the Canadian Government. The other is the High Commission itself at 6 Gregory's Road. The decline of the cinnamon export trade in the 19th century led to the selling of land for "villa development" by the British Government and the development of what came to be called Cinnamon Gardens.

The Canada House property was registered in 1928 but the house itself is thought to have been constructed in 1933 by the Gabriel family. Its style is distinctively art nouveau based on its moulding and original wood, typical of the 1920s and 1930s in Sri Lanka. There are rumours that the flamboyant staircase was modelled after Kensington Palace in London. The ground floor was used as a waiting room, surgery and consultation office for medical patients of Dr. Vraspillai Gabriel, a surgeon who also worked at the Colombo General Hospital. Dr. Gabriel, his wife, Mary Florence, and only child, Anthony (Tony) Gabriel, lived until 1951 in the house that was to become Canada House. The original name of the property was "Kamalai", a Tamil name for a water lotus which is linked to Kamalam, the Hindu Goddess of Wealth.

**Canada House, Official Residence of the Canadian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka at 254 Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7**



The house on then Bullers Road sat in 160 perches of land and was close to other homes that had some illustrious personalities. For example, living around the corner was Dr. Richard Spittel, the "jungle doctor" or "surgeon of the wilderness", located at Wycherley, Coniston Place. Tony Gabriel also went into medicine. He was an oncologist who studied in Colombo, then in the UK and Germany, serving in out stations in Badulla, Jaffna and Galle before returning to Colombo's Maharagama Cancer Hospital. He was educated at Royal College and was a Colonel (commanding officer) in the Sri Lanka Medical Corps from 1979-1982 and President of the Sri Lanka College of Surgeons 1984-1986.

In 1995-1996 he was President of the Royal Colombo Golf Club. The Gabriel family still lives in Cinnamon Gardens, represented by Dr. Tony Gabriel's wife, Jeevamany (nee Kadirgamar Mather) and her sons, Sanjeev and Harin. The first Canadian High Commissioner in Colombo, James Joseph Hurley, leased Canada House in 1955. It was purchased in 1966 for Rs 560,000 or \$127,000.



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The Canadian Government leased Oliver Castle from the Sri Lankan Government in 1952 and then purchased it in 1971. It served as the Canadian Chancery until 2009 when it was closed for extensive rebuilding. It was named after Oliver, the eldest son of Henry Oliver Watson Pieris. It was built in 1898 and occupied in 1903.

There is speculation that the German Consul may have lived there in the intervening period of five years as it was the Sinhalese tradition not to have the owner occupy the house on completion but to rent it to another party for a time. It is cited in the 1907 Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon publication. It was owned originally by Henry Joseph Pieris who was a leading plumbago (graphite) exporter and plantation owner. The Pieris family is reported to have passed the property to the government to compensate for death duties. Cindy Munro was a junior immigration officer in the Canadian High Commission and collected ghost stories she heard from Canadian and local staff. She was told that the house is haunted by Mr. Pieris, his family and domestic staff. Many people have seen the ghosts, others have felt them and the most common reporting relates to strange sounds, lights or movements of objects in the office. With the substantial remodeling of the future Canadian Chancery planned perhaps these stories will come to an end.



Oliver Castle, Canadian Chancery



From a plaque at Canada House showing the Gabriel family portrait

## Interesting Fact! :

A total of 18 Canadian High Commissioners and their families have lived in the house.

- 1) James Hurley 1952-1957
- 2) Reginald Cavell 1957-1960
- 3) James George 1960-1964
- 4) George Grande 1964-1966
- 5) John Timmerman 1967-1970
- 6) Ronald Macdonnell 1970-1973
- 7) Marion Macpherson 1973-1976
- 8) Percy Cooper 1976-1979
- 9) Robert Clark 1979-1982
- 10) David Collacott 1982-1986
- 11) Carolyn McAskie 1986-1989
- 12) Nancy Stiles 1989-1992
- 13) Benno Pflanz 1992-1995
- 14) Konrad Sigurdson 1995-1998
- 15) Ruth Archibald 1998-2002
- 16) Valerie Raymond 2002-2006
- 17) Angela Bogdan 2006-2009
- 18) Bruce Levy 2009-2012



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## CLASS M2 LOCOMOTIVE FLEET - OUR RICH HISTORY.

With a rich history of human ingenuity and technological progress, the development and growth of locomotives began centuries ago. The Sri Lankan Railways have a beautiful history of their own, with particular years that stand out more than others. Between 1954 – 1966, the Sri Lanka Railways received a Class M2 Locomotive Fleet from Canada under the “Colombo Plan Aid – From Canada. General Motors Electro-Motive Diesel (EMD) manufactured a multi-purpose G8, G9 and G12 based Class M2 locomotives and they were considered the most successful locomotives in the Sri Lanka. Because of their brute strength and efficient ways, they were also known as “Canadian Warriors”.



A Class M2 locomotive delivery



Class M2 569



Class M2 626 at Bandarawela Railway Station



Class M2 570 and Steam loco 340

With many distinct characteristics and a range of locomotives, the Class M2 Fleet was segregated into sub classes, M2a, M2b, M2c and M2d. M2a, M2b and M2c were gifted to the Sri Lankan Railways from Canada, while the Class M2d locomotives were originally bought from the USA for cement factory usage in Sri Lanka. However, they were later assigned to the stock Class M2 Fleet of Sri Lanka Railways.

Over the years, Sri Lanka received the fleet of locomotives in sets.

- 1954 – 1955 : 1st set of M2 locomotives (Class M2, 569 to 573)
- 1956 : 2nd set (Class M2a, 591 to 593)
- 1958 : 3rd set (Class M2b, 594 and 595)
- 1961 : 4th set (Class M2c, 626 and 627)
- 1966 : The final set of locomotives (Class M2d, 628 and 629)



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Class	Number	Name	Year	Service Status
M2	569	Ontario	1954	In Service
M2	570	Alberta	1954	In Service
M2	571	Saskatchewan	1954	<i>Out of Service</i>
M2	572	British Columbia	1954	In Service
M2	573	Quebec	1955	In Service
M2a	591	Manitoba	1956	In Service
M2a	592	Nova Scotia	1956	In Service
M2a	593	New Brunswick	1956	In Service
M2b	594	Prince Edward Island	1958	In Service
M2b	595	New Foundland	1958	In Service
M2c	626	Montreal	1961	In Service
M2c	627	Vancouver	1961	In Service
M2d	628	Kankasanthurai	1966	In Service
M2d	629	Galle	1966	In Service

## Interesting Fact! :

All Class M2 locomotives except the 628 and 629 were named after Canadian provinces.







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## MAHAWELI RIVER: CANADA AIDS THE MADURU OYA DAM CONSTRUCTION

Sri Lanka is proud of its ancient "hydraulic" civilization. King Prakramabahu in Polonnaruwa famously said that "not a single drop of water that falls as rain should reach the ocean without benefitting man". Modern engineers follow in the footsteps of those building thousands of years ago, as Canadians supporting the construction of Maduru Oya dam discovered when they dug up an ancient sluice structure. Centuries ago, earthen bunds or dams were built to perfection, a herculean task using elephants and manual labour. The Mahaweli is the longest river in Sri Lanka with a watershed covering one fifth of the island.

Its tributaries are dammed and provide 1000 square kilometres of irrigation in the dry zone and 40% of the country's electricity. Decades ago it was one of the biggest multi-purpose river basin development projects in the world. Mahaweli is a Sri Lankan story but Canada's \$100 million contribution and cooperation with Central Engineering Consultancy Bureau of Mahaweli played a part.

Everything about the project was complicated including the Canadian participation, which involved the Canadian International Development Agency funding of six different companies, as well as FAKJ, a consortium of four construction companies. In February, 1983, Canada's Justice Minister took time out from a Commonwealth Ministerial Law meeting and, with Sri Lankan Lands Minister Gamini Dissanayake, placed the final corefill on Maduru Oya, one of the five Mahaweli dams.



මාදුරුවිය ජලාශය MADURUOYA RESERVOIR



ජලය සැපයීමට හැකි වීම් ප්‍රමාණය	HECTARE'S	1,35,000
IRRIGABLE LAND		
වම් ඉවුර	තෙක්වකර	28,000
LEFT BANK	HECTARE'S	28,000
දකුණ ඉවුර (ඔස්සිත)	තෙක්වකර	14,000
RIGHT BANK (PROPOSED)	HECTARE'S	14,000
ජනාභිස පවුල්		47,000
SETTLEMENTS		47,000
ඔස්සිත ජල විදුලිබල නිෂ්පාදනය මහා මහරී	MW	07.5
PROPOSED HYDRO POWER GENERATION	MW	07.5
මිරිසි මීරි කම්බන්තය - මීරි පවුල්		200
FRESH WATER FISHERY - FAMILIES		200
විදුලිබල-කැපවීමකු ජනාත්තර සංවර්ධන ජීවත් සිය		
FUNDED BY - CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY		
වියලම් - රුපියල් ප්‍රමාණය		2600
COST - MILLION	Rs.	2600
ප්‍රාදේශීය වරෙන් - ජනාත්තර ක්‍රිප්ට් සමාගම (කැනඩාව) සහ ඉංජිනේරු කාර්යයන් පිළිබඳ මධ්‍යම ප්‍රාදේශීය කාර්යාලය (ශ්‍රී ලංකාව)		
CONSULTANTS - CRIPPEN INTERNATIONAL LTD. (CANADA)		
CENTRAL ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY BUREAU (SRI LANKA)		
කොන්ත්‍රාත්කරු - එෂ්. ඒ. එෂ්. ජේ. ජිනාවලිය සමාගම (කැනඩාව)		
CONTRACTOR - F.A.F.J. JOINT VENTURE (CANADA)		
නිර්මාණ කටයුතු 1980 ආරම්භ - 1983 ජුනි මස අවසන් කරන ලදී		
CONSTRUCTION COMMENCED 1980 COMPLETED IN JUNE 1983		

The signboard at Maduru Oya dam showing the key facts and players involved



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There is no consensus on the success or failure of the Mahaweli scheme but the varying views on things that worked and others that did not, makes it a fascinating case study.

Much has been written on the Mahaweli project and its outcomes in each of the five constructed reservoirs –Victoria (UK), Kotmale (Sweden), Randenigala and Rantembe (Germany) and Maduru Oya. Many Canadians have taken part in the debate and pondered big issues of human rights, ethnic conflict, attacks on contractors, and the role of aid that dogged downstream irrigation planning for system B of Madura Oya.

Resettlement issues are frequently fraught with controversy. It took decades for a national resettlement policy to be finalized with help from the Asian Development Bank and Canadian consultants. Canadian economist and resettlement planner Martin ter Woort, was involved in the 1980s in Maduru Oya and subsequently in other resettlement projects. He was keenly aware that the Maduru Oya project ran through an area with both Sinhalese and Tamil communities, with the latter predominant. The issue of who to resettle on the newly-irrigated lands was never resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Ambitions for the Mahaweli scheme were huge in the 1980s when Lalit Godamunne was Secretary General of the Authority. He wanted much more than rice paddy subsistence. He was sure that commercial crop diversity was the key to success. The government was keenly aware of the pent up demand for land to cultivate and for this reason there was intense pressure to fast track everything. The major 1983 and 1987-88 riots set those ambitions back as investors balked.

Today it is possible to visit the ancient sluice and tour the Maduru Oya downstream area while meeting some of the 130,000 people living in the catchment area. Farmers cultivate rice paddy and other field crops and raise livestock.

Engineer Navaratne, Executive Director of Technical Services, joined the Mahaweli Authority in 1978. When queried about Maduru Oya's outcome, he expresses satisfaction with the results because of the livelihood provided to so many families that were resettled on scrub land. The full promise of Maduru Oya was never achieved but Maduru Oya dam was an important step to meet the enormous needs of rural farmers.



**The site of the ancient hydraulic precursor to the modern dam**



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## HYDROMEC INTERNATIONAL (PVT.) LTD.

**Hydromec International (Pvt.) Ltd., a Sri Lankan company dealing in Material Handling Equipment, Construction Machinery, Industrial Equipment/Machine Tools, Power Generation and Spares/Accessories to Marine/Railway/Truck Sector.**

Hydromec International (Pvt) Ltd is the successor to AT&E Ltd. which was formed in October 1995 to market Heavy Equipment in Sri Lanka. The promoters of the company were of the view that the demand for the products were such, that there was ample justification to commence trading in Heavy Equipment.

The company is managed by a group of well-experienced professionals headed by its CEO Mr. Rajah Abeyasinghe. In 1995, the management of the company started negotiating with internationally reputed suppliers of Heavy Equipment and spare parts in order to introduce their products to the Sri Lankan market.

Hydromec. now possess a strong Marketing and Sales Division, a fully equipped Work Shop and sound technical knowledge to undertake marketing with the necessary uninterrupted after sales services to suit the customers expectations.



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## MCLARENS GROUP OF COMPANIES

Established in 1949, the McLarens Group of Companies is one of the leading diversified conglomerates in Sri Lanka. With shipping, marine and logistics at the heart of its business, the McLarens Group has grown into a formidable force spanning the industries of Maritime & Logistics, Petroleum & Energy, Manufacturing & Distribution, Property & Strategic Investments and Leisure. The expansion the company has experienced is evident by the long-standing partnerships the Group has formed with world renowned brands such as ExxonMobil, MSC, ONE, GAC, 3M, Pidilite, Delphi Lockheed and more.

With Maritime and Logistics serving as a solid foundation in the continued expansion into new industries, the Group became pioneers in Marine Ship Supply services off the port limits of Galle, Trincomalee and Hambantota and in

Oil and Gas Exploration services (GAC). Interocean Energy, the Group's bunkering arm, owns and operates the largest fleet of bunker barges in Sri Lanka, while McLarens is the prime support services provider in the upstream oil & gas industry that includes shore-based logistics services. The Group represents international brands from Fortune 500 companies such as ExxonMobil Lubricants in Sri Lanka & the Philippines and 3M products in Sri Lanka. The Group pioneered in Heat insulation Products in the manufacturing sector and ventured into advanced robotics-based automated manufacturing systems. McLarens has significant investments in the real estate sector including several iconic commercial and industrial properties in Colombo while owning and operating two Hotels, Topaz and Tourmaline in Kandy. The McLarens Group has become an employer of choice and has been recognized for the past five consecutive years by the Great Place to Work Institute in the Top 25 of Sri Lanka's Best Companies to Work, while being ranked amongst it's Hall of Famers.