PETITION FOR CANADIAN REPRESENTATION IN ARMENIA

Posted on March 13, 2014 by Keghart



Category: Opinions

After years of failed attempts by the 100,000-strong Canadian-Armenian community to facilitate the establishment of Canadian diplomatic representation in Armenia, a small group of Canadian-Armenians has launched a petition to persuade Ottawa to open an embassy in Yerevan manned by a *chargé d'affaires*.

The petition is addressed to Canada's Minister of External Affairs John Baird. The petitioners believe that a permanent Canadian diplomatic presence in Armenia would ensure Canada immediate interaction with and access to the government of Armenia, its businesses and people. Such a presence would promote Canadian commercial interests and promote other areas of bilateral relations, the petitioners maintain.

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The petitioners say the Canadian diplomatic office in Yerevan would not replace the Canadian Embassy in Moscow which is currently responsible for Armenia. The focus of the Yerevan office would be the development of Canada-Armenia relations.

A Canadian diplomatic presence in Armenia, say the petitioners, would increase Canadian investor confidence in Armenia. Investments create jobs and help curtail emigration. As Armenia transitions to a full democracy with market economy, Canadian diplomatic presence in Yerevan can boost such policies and make Armenia more confident about democracy, the petitioners believe.

The petitioners hope the presence of a Canadian *chargé d'affaires* would eventually be followed by full diplomatic relations and an ambassador.

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