



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Plaque unveiling honours Canadian Ambassador Alan Beesley and his work on the historic UN Law of the Sea Treaty

VICTORIA, BC - The Maritime Museum of BC will unveil a plaque on June 5 to honour Ambassador Alan Beesley and the UN Law of the Sea Treaty. Canada's role in the successful creation of this landmark international agreement was a significant diplomatic achievement. The treaty –signed in 1982- has been described as a “constitution for the world's oceans.”

In 1983, the *New Yorker* called it “the most far-reaching and potentially influential agreement on the peacetime conduct of nations ever attempted.”

BC-born Beesley was instrumental in shaping the negotiation process and the final treaty. He was involved from the start as part of the Canadian delegations in a series of international conferences which extended from 1967 to 1982. Beesley eventually led the Canadian teams, but also became regarded as one of the most influential negotiators because of his diplomatic skills, determination and mastery of the complex issue involved. During his diplomatic career, Beesley held several posts as an ambassador, but he is most remembered for his close involvement in international legal issues including new regulations to assert Canadian national sovereignty during his time in External Affairs.

The Law of the Sea Treaty –now signed by over 165 nations- established international agreement on sovereignty in offshore waters. It also established definitions for jurisdiction to use resources in continental shelf areas. Research now underway to determine the limit of how far the northern continental shelves extend from Canada and the other countries bordering on the Arctic Ocean- Russia, the United States, Norway and Greenland – will be evaluated under a process established by the Law of Sea Treaty.

A graduate of Kamloops High School in 1945, Beesley was born in Smithers in 1929 and spent his early years in Williams Lake, Penticton and Kamloops. After completing a law degree at

UBC, he worked from 1950 to 1956 with Crease and Company, the oldest legal firm in Victoria which was located in the building now occupied by the Rebar Restaurant in Bastion Square. An early interest in the sea led him to become a naval reserve officer with HMCS *Malahat*.

After a distinguished 35 year career as a Foreign Service officer and legal expert where he was recognized with several awards including the Order of Canada and the Prime Minister's Outstanding Public Servant Award, Beesley retired to Oak Bay where he died in 2009.

A permanent plaque is being placed on the exterior of the Maritime Museum of BC using funds donated by interested individuals and groups. A small temporary exhibit inside the museum will share glimpses of Ambassador Beesley's life and contributions.

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Should media wish to attend, the plaque unveiling will be at 4:30pm on June 5 at 28 Bastion Square in Victoria BC.

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