

# Aspen Daily News

Published on Aspen Daily News Online (<http://www.aspendailynews.com>)

Business elite attracts city's first honorary consul

Writer:

Dorothy Atkins

Byline:

Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

Aspen's reputation as a retreat for some of the world's wealthiest business people has attracted a foreign government to establish an honorary consulate in the city for the first time ever.

The government of Lithuania is appointing an honorary consul to foster relations between the European country and American businesses in Aspen today.

Dr. John Prunskis will be appointed the honorary consul and his job will be to represent Lithuania, its people and facilitate trade between businesses. It is the first time in Aspen's history that the town will play host to a consul.

There might not be many cultural similarities between Aspen and a country that suffered decades of oppression by the Soviet Union. Still, the two locales can benefit from each other financially, Prunskis said.

Lithuania's economy has grown since it became independent from the Soviet Union 23 years ago, and its technology and agricultural industries are quickly becoming examples for other countries in Europe, he said. Lithuania is currently trying to reach out to financially successful communities where it wants to have more business ties and Aspen is one of those places, Prunskis said.

"Aspen is the center for cultural [activities], business and the arts," he said. "It's a whole mosaic of wonderful people to bring to the table."

That's why it makes sense for a consul to be established here, Prunskis said. If someone in Aspen is interested in initiating business deals with Lithuanian companies, Prunskis' role as a consul will foster that, he said.

Prunskis and Zygimantas Pavilionis, the Lithuanian ambassador to the United States, spearheaded the effort to establish the new diplomatic position. Aspen was chosen for its reputation as a resort town that attracts some of the most successful business leaders in the world, Pavilionis said. Connecting with those leaders could help Lithuania's economy grow, he added.

"After 23 years of successful reforms, we are one of the most dynamic countries in the European Union," Pavilionis said. "We boom, we grow and when we discussed opening a consulate in Aspen, it was because it is a top place for elite businessmen."

There are currently about 1,900 Lithuanian consuls worldwide, and they are established in 19 U.S. states. Most of the consuls are located in California and around Chicago, where the majority of the Lithuanian-American population lives, Pavilionis said. One day, Pavilionis would like to see a Lithuanian consul in each American state, he said.

The Lithuanian government chose Prunskis for the position because of his relationship with Aspen. Prunskis, who is a physician and lives in Chicago, first came to Aspen in 1963 when he was 7 years old and he has been a frequent visitor to the area ever since, he said.

Prunskis' parents immigrated from Lithuania to the U.S. before he was born. Prunskis has maintained ties to his family's culture by learning his parent's language, and he is one of 10 people who live outside of Lithuania that have been selected to serve in the country's parliament.

Today's ceremony begins at 4 p.m. at Gondola Plaza and will last about 40 minutes. There will be short speeches by Pavilionis, Prunskis and Aspen Mayor Mick Ireland, and performances by Lithuanian folk dancers and a soloist. Afterwards, there will be a reception held at the Limelight Hotel.

"Everyone is welcome," Prunskis said. "Anyone who is interested in witnessing history and perhaps seeing something they haven't experienced should come."

[dorothy@aspdailynews.com](mailto:dorothy@aspdailynews.com) [1]

archive\_date:  
1 day

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.aspdailynews.com/section/home/157020>

**Links:**

[1] <mailto:dorothy@aspdailynews.com>