

The Honourable Lincoln Alexander (born Jan. 21, 1922, in Toronto and died Oct. 19, 2012)

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Lincoln Alexander, born in Toronto in 1922, was the first person from a visible minority to become the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and the first Black member of parliament in Canadian history. During the second world war he worked as a machinist in a factory in Hamilton for the war effort and in 1942 he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force as a wireless operator. He was honourably discharged in 1945 at the rank of corporal (Walker, 2013).

In 1960, Mr. Alexander went on a tour of 23 African nations and said about this experience:

“The experience was an eye-opener for me, not only as a lawyer, but also as a human being, because I began to realize what Black people could do. I saw that, unlike the Hollywood version, these Africans were men and women of significant talents. I became conscious of my Blackness. I had come from a White world. Now we were in Africa, and I realized we are people of skill and creativity. I was a Black man and I was a somebody. I started standing tall.” (Walker, 2013, para. 8)

Mr. Alexander entered politics in 1965 and won the seat in 1968 making him the first Black Canadian to sit in the House of Commons. In September 1985 he became the 24th Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, the first Black Canadian to be appointed to a viceregal position (Walker, 2013, para. 15). When his term was complete, he took the position of chancellor at the University of Guelph, serving for five consecutive terms. Mr. Alexander’s last appointment was in 2000 as the chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (Walker, 2013).

After his death in 2012, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario honoured Alexander by declaring Jan. 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day. It was observed for the first time in 2015 (Walker, 2013).

Reference:

Walker, J. W.S.G. (2013). Lincoln Alexander. In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lincoln-maccauley-alexander>

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