

Ladies and gentlemen:

Six years ago, the world watched in horror as the tragic events in Tiananmen Square unfolded. For many Canadians these events changed our lives forever. They propelled us into action. We rallied. We spoke out. And we made a difference.

As I once again commemorate the anniversary of the June 4, 1989, Tiananmen tragedy, I am overcome by emotion.

I will never forget June 4th, 1989. It was a typical sunny Vancouver spring day and I was out having lunch with my wife Maureen and my children Justun and Christina. Someone at the next table said: "the soldiers have opened fire in Tiananmen." We rushed home and as we watched the horror unfold on television I turned to my wife and said: "We must do something."

I quickly learned that many Canadians, and people around the world, were thinking the very same thing. Within hours many Canadians, including myself, were beginning to work together to organize in support of those brave men and women in Tiananmen. I made great friends in the movement and eventually, my friends and I founded the Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement [VSSDM].

Indeed, along with the Chinese Student Association of UBC [the University of British Columbia] and the Alma Mater Society, the VSSDM erected the beautiful statue and plaque at UBC to record and honour the courage of the Chinese people during that extraordinary and painful time.

My decision to run for political office was in large part due to the events of June 1989. For as I watched Chinese men and women risk their lives for something we all too often take for granted here in Canada, I realized that I needed to give back something to the country that welcomed me with such open arms in 1969.

Following the federal election of October 1993, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien appointed me Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific). When I first met with the Prime Minister to discuss my appointment, he made it quite clear to me that he respected the fact that I stood up for what I believed in.

I realized that my new position would offer me a unique opportunity to address these issues at the highest levels of government both within Canada and China. While my new position would involve a new approach to these issues, the goal of human rights and democratic development would still be a priority. A year and a half later, I am proud to say I am still fighting for human rights improvements both in China and around the world.

Unfortunately, the human rights situation with regard to human rights advocates in China has not improved significantly since 1989. Indeed, the recent arrest of several Chinese dissidents in