

September; and former Minister Ciaccia's spearheading of the largest mission to Lebanon by a Canadian province. Finally, I could not overlook the activities of the Canada-Lebanon Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with its dynamic president, Georges Homsy. With the gradual resumption of a more normal life in Lebanon, these ties between Lebanese and Lebanese Canadians can now yield results for the benefit of all concerned.

Ladies and gentlemen, real and tangible progress has been made in the Middle East in recent years within the framework of the peace process and the restoration of a degree of stability in Lebanon. These developments are a source of genuine satisfaction for all those who care about establishing a just peace in the region and a renewed future for Lebanon.

A new page has finally been turned in Lebanon after so many years of war. We must build together on the progress I have just outlined. To do so, we must continue to develop human ties between our two countries, we must strengthen our business ties, we must multiply our political ties. Thus, I have decided to proceed with the reopening of the Canadian Embassy in Beirut in the beginning of the new year.

Caution is still in order, of course, but I am confident that the objectives that we are setting with our partners in the region can be achieved.

In closing, I wish to tell you once again how pleased I am to be among you tonight. I wish to thank the leaders of your association for giving me the opportunity to express my views on Canada's role in the Middle East, Lebanon and Syria.

Thank you.