

Allow me first to thank Mr. Rémillard, the Institut international d'études administratives de Montréal and the École nationale d'administration publique for their kind invitation. The Government of Canada is proud to be associated with this important event.

Unless I am mistaken, the theme of this conference – *Globalized Economies: State-Private Sector Partnership?* – has prompted some speakers to talk in terms of finality. We are all products of our time and, in one way or another, we are all influenced by the thinking of the day. Perhaps this is why people speak so much about "endings" these days, and why the concept colours most of the talk we hear – whether the subject is the end of the Cold War, the end of the welfare state, of the nation state, of history or of communism.

We will also be hearing more and more about the end of the 20th century – I wouldn't want to leave that off my list. Perhaps we would be wise to set most of these expressions aside, bearing in mind how easy it is to use a turn of phrase simply because it is fashionable. We lose our sense of perspective when we focus only on the "end" of things, and are unable to find the inventive solutions needed for the problems of humankind.

A few days from now, the leaders of the world's seven most industrialized countries will be meeting in Halifax for their 21st summit. Whatever we might think about the changing nature of foreign policy and international relations, these summit meetings are always useful and relevant. They allow us not only to review the major problems facing us, but above all they give us an opportunity to collectively manage the changes affecting all of us.

Thus, over against the concept of finality we should set that of change. Change is something we experience daily. We find it in technology, science, intellectual life, culture and (of course) politics. None of these changes occurs in a vacuum. Technological change, for example, has an impact on politics, and vice versa.

The 20th century has been characterized by what I would call "the emancipation of the individual." In politics this takes the form of extending universal suffrage, developing the concept of individual rights and increasing the dialogue between politicians and voters. In fact, it demonstrates that the state, whatever form it may take, is not supreme. Emancipation of the individual means that the state is no longer the centre of all power, influence and action.

Paradoxically, the multiplication of stakeholders in international relations has renewed the importance of summits such as the G-7. The power of the individual is constantly on the increase, while governments' room to manoeuvre is on the decrease – as is their ability to defend the rights of the individual. In today's context of globalization, now more than ever the multilateral institutions must be strengthened in order to become more sensitive to the aspirations of the people whom they serve. The ongoing dialogue furnished by the G-7 summits is an important tool in helping to achieve this objective.