

Honoured guests, Mr. Bata, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. To our distinguished guests from the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, welcome to Canada. And to the organizers of this conference, congratulations. I understand that today's seminars have been an overwhelming success.

I am extremely sorry that the tabling of our federal budget in the House of Commons this afternoon has prevented me from being with you in person. I understand that your conference is going well, and I appreciate this opportunity to share some thoughts with you.

Whenever I think of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, I remember my visit in the spring of 1990, a time of great change and expectations for Czechoslovakia. In 1989, the Czech and Slovak people rose up peacefully to rid themselves of the communist rule which had dominated their lives for over 40 years. The "Velvet Revolution" as it became known, marked the most rapid, decisive, and peaceful departure of a Communist regime from power in all of Central and Eastern Europe.

As the architects of the new Czech and Slovak Federal Republic map out the blueprint for political and economic reformation, we look forward to this country's bright and challenging future. Canadians have always felt a special affection for the people of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, and I like to believe that the reverse is also true. Obviously the large and prosperous communities of Czech and Slovak origin in Canada have had a major impact on this special relationship. But the real strength in our relationship stems from all that we hold in common as countries.

Both our countries must face the challenges of charting their political and economic courses in a rapidly changing world. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, securing economic and political stability will be the most daunting challenge. The dissolution of the Soviet Union will have a profound impact on the course of future European and world events. Now we see the emergence of a new kind of state structure, the European Community, which will play a major role in world affairs and undoubtedly affect the future of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic.

The member states of the European Community, many of whom have a long history of conflict with one another, have joined to manage their strategic resources to prevent future wars and prosper together. History shows us that nations are more easily destroyed than built. The countries of the European Community have prospered because of their unity, which in turn strengthens security.

In Canada we have realized that unity and competitiveness in the international marketplace are keys to Canada's prosperity. Like the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Canada was formed by the