

Mr. Lajeunesse, ladies and gentlemen, guests:

Let me thank the AUCC [Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada] and its members for their cordial invitation. For some time I have wanted to meet with you and to take stock of the international dimension of higher education. I would also like to share with you a few comments on our foreign policy review. A good number of you testified before the Special Joint Committee. Your comments were greatly appreciated by the Committee and the Government. If you will allow me, I shall begin by situating the role of the universities and colleges in our new foreign policy. I would then like to examine together the possibilities of co-operation that exist between the Government and Canada's universities and colleges. I would be pleased to answer your questions afterward.

Last month, I presented in the House of Commons the Government's response to the recommendations of the Joint Committee along with our new Foreign Policy Statement. *Canada in the World* emphasizes the importance of our special position in the international arena and the opportunities it generates for Canadians. The Statement recognizes that economic, political and social change has accelerated since the end of the Cold War and that we must adapt in order to face the challenges this presents. While recognizing that our actions are limited by the current financial situation, the Government has set three main objectives to guide the choices that must be made against this background of constant change:

- 1) The promotion of prosperity and employment;
- 2) The protection of our security in a stable world environment;
- 3) The projection of Canadian values and culture.

These objectives are clearly interdependent and complementary. I think that Canada's universities and colleges play a unique role. In fact, you are helping to achieve each one of these three objectives. You are training our future labour force, our future entrepreneurs. You are helping to build bridges between people to construct a better world. You are helping to project our identity abroad and to disseminate our values throughout the world. Not many can boast of having such an influence toward achieving these three objectives. Thus the Government sees you as an important partner in its international activities.

We have already taken steps to introduce the new directions contained in the Statement, and you will be interested to know that a new Global Issues and International Cultural Affairs Branch has been created within my department. From now on, International Cultural Relations will be under the responsibility of an assistant deputy minister.

This decision shows the importance that our government places on helping your sector to get our country poised favourably for the new knowledge-based world economy. The Government Statement