

We look upon the Bank as the main vehicle of our participation in Latin American development. But we have also instituted a bilateral program of technical assistance for Latin America that will enable us to put Canadian skills and Canadian experience at the disposal of our Latin American partners. These two steps, between them, will involve more than a fourfold increase in the level of our development assistance to Latin America as compared with our assistance to that area before the new policy was brought into effect.

So much for the record of what has been accomplished. But we do not look upon our Latin American policy as something static. We intend to push forward on the course that has now been laid out. In particular, we hope to be able to enhance our participation in the inter-American institutions of which we are members. We also hope to associate the Canadian provincial governments and Canadian institutions and organizations of various kinds more closely with the functional activities of the inter-American system that are of direct interest to them.

On the bilateral plane, we made a very promising start in strengthening relations with Mexico at the ministerial meeting that was held here in Ottawa almost exactly a year ago today. We are pursuing the many avenues of closer co-operation that were opened up by that meeting -- cultural, commercial and technical. We shall be concerned in the months to come to extend that pattern of co-operation to other countries of the hemisphere. We shall be holding a meeting of our Latin American heads of mission in Brasilia next month to review progress and to identify new directions for carrying forward our Latin American policy.

No policy ultimately stands much of a chance of being viable that is not backed by public opinion. That is why we have looked to organizations like the Canadian Association for Latin America to help us bring home to Canadians the value of the closer partnership with Latin America at which we are aiming. That is why we have been meeting periodically with your executive to make sure that we were moving in parallel and not at cross purposes. That is also why the Canadian Government has now formally agreed with the CALA to support it in the efforts it is launching to acquaint the Canadian business community and others with the new opportunities that are being opened up by closer Canadian involvement in the hemisphere.

If any evidence of the Association's pioneering work were needed, we need look no further than this conference. The aim of the conference -- to identify what Latin Americans seek from Canada and what Canadians can offer to Latin America, to define the principles that should guide our partnership, and to create a basis for better understanding -- is a promising pointer to the future. It will be for decision-makers at every level in Canada to try to translate the conclusions of the conference into concrete results.