

Your Excellency, Mrs. Gromyko, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish first of all to thank you, our hosts, for the warmth and hospitality with which you have greeted me, Maureen and my delegation, on this my first visit to the Soviet Union.

Across the centuries, travellers coming to this great country have been struck by its remarkable diversity. I have had the opportunity to see the sweep of its contrasts: the vast lands of Siberia, the modern vitality of the ancient capitals of Leningrad and Moscow. We have travelled, in a matter of hours, from the monuments of past accomplishments, to the exciting foundation for new achievements in the future--from the Hermitage Museum and the spires of the Kremlin to the Research Institutes of Novosibirsk.

Yet the complexity of this country is deeper still than its geographical regions: It is to be found in the many nationalities, languages and cultures which constitute the Soviet Union. Thus I look forward particularly to my visit to Kiev and to a first hand acquaintance with a culture whose depth and vigour have made such a contribution to Canadian society.

Because Canada is also a land of challenge and achievement. In Western Canada, my birth-place and home, the splendid variety of the landscape is mirrored in the diversity of the peoples who have enriched it. From the many cultures alive and well in Canada, there has been forged a people united--united by the common purpose of building a prosperous and tolerant nation.

The lessons of our domestic experience have also served Canada well in our foreign policy. We are a nation that has learned that, even where differences exist, consensus can be built upon a foundation of mutual understanding and areas of common purpose, and we have drawn on that experience to act as a voice for moderation in international affairs.

My visit to the Soviet Union bears witness to the depth of the Canadian governments certainty that through such contacts our respective interests will be promoted, mutual confidence enhanced, and a contribution made to easing international tensions. It would be naive to deny the depth of the differences between Canada and the Soviet Union, but these differences themselves provide compelling reasons why we should seek to increase our efforts to understand each other.

Canada is committed to NATO and to the cornerstones of the alliance--collective security and the search for a relaxation of East/West tensions. Canada and the other Western countries wish to see East/West relations become less confrontational and more cooperative. All of us share a planet and a common human identity and from this emerges one of the most ancient of human aspirations--the aspiration to live in peace.