

RETHINKING STATE SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Keynote Speech

The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy
Director and CEO of the Liu Centre for the Study of Global Issues

Thank you very much, and welcome to everybody. I am reminded at this opening session that one of the last and most poignant meetings I had in Japan was with the late Prime Minister Obuchi; he and I became quite good friends during the time when his foreign ministry invited me to join him at the opening ceremonies of the Nagoya Olympics. He was sponsoring, as you will recall, an opening ceremony that had to do with the landmines campaign, a demonstration of the universal commitment. Just as I was walking up the stairs to join in these celebrations, I got a note that the Prime Minister expected me in Cabinet the next morning to talk about Kosovo. I recall this very much because the last words I had with Keizo were, "I will see you soon;" and, unfortunately, we never did. So, I suppose one of the things that brings me here today is the opportunity to pay tribute to a very good friend and a man with whom I spent many hours talking about security issues.

Let me also say that I am really quite thrilled at the Ambassador and the Embassy staff who have made such an effort to extend in so many categories and fields of endeavour the "Think Canada" process. A few years back, we commissioned an international survey about what the rest of the world thought of Canada, who they thought Canadians were. First reports back were a little discouraging. The one Canadian that virtually everybody around the world knew was Pamela Lee Anderson, an actress in the television program Baywatch. And, of course, the pollster told us the reason why everybody knew her is that they saw more of her than anybody else. The only encouraging part of the survey, I thought, was that the Ukrainians were almost the exception to the rule. They said, in rating what they thought as the strongest characteristics of Canadians, that we were the sexiest people on the earth. Needless to say, their foreign aid budget substantially increased after that. Whether this has a direct connection with the Think Canada program, I am not sure; but I was told that in successive surveys it showed that the instructions for our diplomats to go out and make ourselves much better known has resulted in Pamela Anderson being displaced by Shania Twain as the most popular Canadian abroad. So, we have gone from bikinis to country music in a very short span of time. It shows the power of diplomacy working at its finest.

This morning, in the 20 minutes I have, I will string together 20 minutes of 30 second clips, which is the normal standard fare. But, I will try to string them together in what I hope can be some reflections for you on the changing nature of security in the world and how it applies to this region, and certainly how we see it as Canadians.

I'd really like to start by telling you a story about a young girl named Emma. Now, if some of you think you've wandered into a lecture on Jane Austen's chief character, I haven't totally made that wholesale transition. But, I go back to what some wise person once said, that the narrative of politics today is the human story, not the soliloquy of the State; that often we learn more from looking at the world through the eyes of individuals, and in their stories, than we do by trying to develop a high level of abstraction and frameworks, important as they may be. We can understand a great deal of what we are doing by listening to people's stories.

I had an opportunity in the course of the five years that I was foreign minister to meet a lot of interesting people, as you might know, from Fidel to Madeleine to others. Most of them I met at funerals, which was among the primary responsibilities for foreign ministers, to attend those kinds of functions on behalf of the State, and such kinds of formal ceremonies.