

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

It is always a pleasure to welcome international meetings to Canada, but it is a particular pleasure to welcome this one. We are proud of the leading role that Canada has taken to advance the Convention on Biological Diversity during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process. We are also glad that we now have the opportunity to build on that success by hosting your discussions here in Montreal.

This city, in fact, is a very appropriate place for these meetings -- and not just because Montreal is an accomplished host and a city with a truly international outlook. It was the wealth of biological riches that built this city. Furs, agriculture and forest products contributed to the building of this city and this country -- a process that continues today. Montreal's economic base now includes a major pharmaceutical sector, which is also linked to our biological wealth.

What is true in Montreal is also the case in community after community across this country. While we support the work to maintain biological diversity for its intrinsic value, it is not simply a matter of altruism and scientific concern. It is also a matter of economics. It is a matter of jobs. Biodiversity creates tangible benefits for people. That reality reinforces the position that we have taken on the issues of biodiversity.

This evening, I would like to make the economic case for biodiversity. Some object to basing the case for biological diversity on the calculus of jobs and income. I disagree. From my perspective, biodiversity is too often a subject for debate among the already convinced. To broaden understanding and support, it will be vital to underline the relationship between continued biodiversity and the increased economic health of mankind.

The history of Canadian economic life is a history drawn from our biological riches. Although our economy is now highly industrialized and has a massive service sector, we remain tied to our biological resources for a high proportion of our wealth.

Seventy billion Canadian dollars per year: that was the dollar value of the benefits realized by Canadians from our biological resources, according to one federal government study. That \$70 billion is calculated from a wide variety of factors, but the point is clear. Biodiversity underpins our economic well-being in ways both large and small.

For example, wildlife activities in Canada contribute \$6.5 billion to our gross domestic product, but without biological diversity and necessary habitats, much of that income would disappear. Jobs would become extinct and the potential for many more in the future would disappear.