

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to pay tribute to the fortieth anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which has been a cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy for successive Canadian governments. What we celebrate is not only forty years of uninterrupted peace in Europe but the values which brought us together then and which still unite us today.

When he signed the Treaty on behalf of Canada, the Right Honourable Lester Pearson stated:

"This treaty, though born out of fear and frustration, must, however, lead to positive social, economic and political achievements which will extend beyond the time of emergency which gave it birth, or the geographic area which it now includes."

We should remember the situation at that time: the Soviet Army, still at wartime strength, remained in Europe; West Berlin was blockaded; nascent democracy in Czechoslovakia had just been crushed in a communist coup; and the still-devastated Western European nations were being overtly threatened with the same fate. That is in stark contrast to the opportunities and prosperity that exist today and NATO has been, and is, an essential instrument in that progress.

The unity and determination of the Alliance has often been tested - by periodic turmoil in Eastern Europe, the Hungarian uprising, the Suez Crisis, the crushing of the Prague Spring, détente in the seventies, Afghanistan and the two-track decision. In each instance, NATO has emerged stronger and more relevant.

Today NATO provides for the common security of over 600 million people in 16 nations on both sides of the Atlantic. The modern era is marked by conflict, yet Europe, the region with the highest concentration of sophisticated weaponry in the world, is enjoying the longest sustained period of peace and stability since the height of the Holy Roman Empire. That peace was made possible through NATO's persistent commitment to pursue complementary goals: first to maintain adequate defences to deter aggression; second to control and limit armaments through carefully negotiated and verifiable agreements; and third to constantly promote dialogue with the countries of Eastern Europe.

Has the Alliance met the test that Lester Pearson set for it 40 years ago? Has it led to positive social, economic and political achievements? Is it more than just a military alliance? Clearly the answer is YES to all three questions.