

A year ago, the world was celebrating its good fortune. There was a strong sense that an historic corner had been turned, that we were on our way to a new period of peace and common purpose. The Berlin Wall was down. Playwrights had become presidents. Democracy was chosen and respected in Nicaragua, and almost everywhere else in Latin America, and throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The Marxists' economic model was virtually everywhere rejected; old divisions were forgotten; old adversaries began to work together.

The world keeps changing and today there is less euphoria.

There is a war in the Persian Gulf.

The independence of the Baltic States, indeed, the very premise of perestroika seems in doubt.

Western faith in progress is haunted by the stark image of the students and the tanks in Tiananmen Square.

In our own country, where we claim such respect for one another, and advertise our tolerance, Muslim children and Jewish children have to go to school with guards -- children have to face the fact of hatred; and the families of military personnel become the targets of crude crank calls.

In fact, the world is much better off than it was when an Iron Curtain divided Europe, and Nelson Mandela was locked in jail and the United Nations could not move itself from talk to action.

But improvement does not mean perfection, and if the last six months have proven anything to Canadians, it is that we cannot change the world by watching or by wishing.

The taunts against Arab kids and Jewish kids are happening right here, in this city, in this country, and the only way to stop them is by the example we demonstrate to our families, our neighbours.

The principle that aggression should be stopped is a Canadian principle, honoured in two World Wars, in Korea, in more peacekeeping missions than any other nation, and in the constant focus of a foreign policy that has sought to build international institutions and enlarge international order from the United Nations to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to the Commonwealth, to La Francophonie, to international treaties, reaching from the oceans to the ozone.