

It goes without saying that the UN is important. I think it is important to say, as Archbishop Scott did, that so is this Association. One of the lessons that I have learned in the conduct of foreign policy is that it is easier to take initiatives and to carry them out if you have public support. Very often that public support for institutions or for initiatives comes more easily from people other than a government who operate at some arm's length from a government.

I think that the work that you have ahead of you is immensely important because it is related directly to our capacity to take advantage of the opportunities that are open to us in the United Nations.

As we all know, Canada was elected three months ago to the Security Council for a two year term that began this month. We won on the first ballot. We won against strong competition. We won with 80% of the votes cast by member states.

That can be a source of pride, and it is. But I think what is more important is that it is an indication both of the esteem in which Canada is held throughout the world and it is a very sharp reminder of what is expected of Canada by other member countries of the United Nations including some of the nations that have been its most strenuous supporters.

I don't need to recite particularly here Canada's contribution to the United Nations. It goes back to the earliest days of the institution, to its creation in San Francisco.

Canadians have been involved in the brightest and the darkest days of the United Nations since its beginning. Mr. Pearson, General Burns, Dr. Chisholm, John Humphrey, Maurice Strong, Therese Paquet-Sévigny - they are but a few of the Canadians who have distinguished themselves and their country through their dedicated service in the U.N. family of agencies.

Peacekeeping, of course, has been a special Canadian vocation. I was out on the west coast between the months of September and November this year and after one of my meetings a chap came up to me who was one of the 80,000 who had served in the blue berets of the United Nations. He was not a person whose name or visage would be known on national television, but a person who had nonetheless contributed as directly and in ways perhaps more importantly than any of us in this room because he had not only served in peacekeeping forces, but he understood why Canada was there, what the peacekeeping concept was about and sought to gain understanding for that in his community.