

Mr. President,

For me, it is a particular pleasure and honour to be able to speak to you today. As a politician I am always acutely aware of the important role that the senior members of the fourth estate play in the interpretation and indeed the conduct of public affairs. After all, we as members of the government may make our decisions, and even make speeches, but the way in which what we do and what we say is transmitted to the public lies largely in your hands. As a result, I want to be as frank in what I have to say as possible, so that you will be able to carry my message to your audience.

It is not by accident that this is the first official visit that I am making as the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada of the new government. Perhaps many would think that I would have first gone to Washington, in light of the very great importance that any Canadian Minister must put on the relations that we have with our closest and most important international partner. Nonetheless, I could not be more pleased that it is to France that my first official visit is being made. Our close and traditional ties make this a natural place for me to begin.

I want to take this opportunity to say a few words about the way in which the new Canadian government approaches its responsibilities in terms of foreign policy.

The foreign policy of any country is a combination of continuity and innovation. It could hardly be otherwise. The element of continuity is based on fundamental interests: on geography; on history; on the demands of security and economics; on fundamental national value. But the world, alas, does not stand still, and the way these basic interests are pursued must be constantly reviewed and adapted to the changing circumstances of the world in which we live. And of course today this is ever more important than previously, with the growing interdependence of the international community, the recognition of the concept of the global village, the stark fact of the impinging of international considerations on so many of the decisions that must be taken on domestic issues.

Any observer of the international scene must recognize that the realities of the politics of the world are greatly different now from what they were a decade or more ago. And it is to ensure that Canadian foreign policy is now and in the future relevant to the international realities that we have committed our government to a full review of our foreign policy. But that is not the only reason. Our government is absolutely committed to the concept of marshalling public support for the programmes that we espouse. We firmly believe that if any foreign policy is to be effective, it must command and maintain public support. That is why, without abdicating our responsibilities as a government, we intend to involve Canadians fully in the new imprint we intend to give to Canada's foreign policy.