

Wherever we come from in the Americas, however we came to the Americas, we have elements of a common heritage of geography, history and culture and a common belief in democracy.

Parts of Vancouver Island, for example, were first charted by the Peruvian explorer, Juan Francisco Quadra. Quadra was among the first, but by no means the last Latin American whose life adventure brought him to Canada. Altogether, some 300,000 Canadians trace their roots to the region.

North and south in the Americas, we have much to learn about one another. The interest of Canadians in the hemisphere is not new. I refer not only to trade and investment flows, to banking and tourism, but to security, stability and solidarity.

To the security of supply, for example, of Venezuelan crude, which accounts for 40 per cent of our imported oil.

To the stability of the hemisphere, to the vouchsafing of our democratic and western values against the menace of terrorism.

To our solidarity in the war against drug abuse. In the southern part of the hemisphere, your governments are in the front line of that war. They are working to reduce the supply push, as we are working to reduce the demand pull.