

I am delighted and I am very much honoured to have been invited here today -- to the founding conference of the National Congress of Italian-Canadians. This is, I think, not an occasion to speak about foreign policy nor even about the important and prospering relations between Canada and Italy. Nor do I think you would like to hear from me the many clichés often considered appropriate for occasions such as this -- about the greatness of the Italian nation.

The greatness is there, of course, set firmly in the history of civilized man and no cosmetic polish of mine will add to its lustre. No, there are other things I would like to talk about, which may have more relevance to this Founding Meeting.

But before you hear further from me, you are going to hear from the Prime Minister. It is my pleasant duty to read you his message which, as it is in three languages, I shall do in descending order of proficiency:

"It is with great pleasure that I send warmest greetings to all in attendance at the historic Italian-Canadian Founding Conference of February 23 and 24, 1974. Your meeting together is a culmination of months of planning and is indicative of the vigorous life and energy of the Italian community in Canada.

" -- Le Canada est un pays fortuné: de nombreuses races s'y côtoient, chacune apportant sa contribution particulière. Dans la diversité repose notre force; dans la variété, notre richesse, notre souplesse. Le partage de notre héritage culturel particulier avec nos concitoyens nous permet d'établir ensemble le fondement de la tolérance et de la compréhension entre les races et les nations.

" -- Siamo tuttavia conscienti del pericolo di diventare talmente assorti nel nostro gruppo particolare da perdere il contatto con gli altri elementi in mezzo a noi. Mantenendo aperto lo scambio con altri gruppi, con una comunicazione costante e con un dialogo ininterrotto, possiamo sventare questo pericolo. Spero e confido che il fatto di avere fra di noi una comunità italiana vigorosa e attiva arricchirà la vita di tutti i canadesi. Invio i miei più vivi auguri per il successo della Conferenza."

I expect that some of this ground will have been covered by Mr. Haidasz last night -- but at the risk of duplication I would like to give you some of my views on the ethnic community and its relationship to Canadian society as a whole.

It is fashionable to say that the United States is a melting pot and Canada a mosaic.

A mosaic, or perhaps a fresco, we have used these phrases as symbols or catch-words. But the symbols we use are not adequate. A mosaic or a fresco is a work of imagination, skill, even of faith. But it is frozen in time. It is not living and growing, changing and maturing as is Canada.