

You have well earned your reputation as the Athens of the Americas. You have been able to produce generation after generation of brilliant intellectuals who have been open to the world and have been able to take the best it has had to offer. Both you and President Lopez have in your writings and in your political actions demonstrated a great concern for the social conditions of the average citizen. The Colombia Institute of Social Security antedates the Canadian Medicare programme. The social values that underlie President Lopez' income tax reform and the substantial extensions that have been made to the services of the Colombia Institute of Social Services are ones that have their counterparts in Canada as well.

We, for our part, have benefitted enormously from two cardinal factors in our history - first, that we have never suffered the disruption of our cultural ties with Europe, and second that we possess in Canada two principal European languages and thus we have been able throughout our history to draw from the riches of two European cultures as well as on the drive and the innovations of this hemisphere.

While we have greatly benefitted from diversity of influences available to us, we have been only able to draw on these sources, and maintain the country open to the winds of change that are sweeping the planet because of our commitment to the principles of an open society. Our deeply rooted respect for democratic freedoms and human rights has also been for us a means of dealing most effectively with the linguistic, cultural, regional and social differences within Canada. I would be less than frank with you if I did not admit that it has not always been easy for us to maintain these principles. We have suffered from the stresses and strains that have arisen from the accelerated pace of history in our time. Nevertheless, we are firmly of the belief that the open society, with all the risks that it entails, is, in the long run, the only way of successfully achieving change in stability, as well as promoting unity and prosperity.

As you have written, Your Excellency, Bolivar's vision of a united Hispanic America that would gradually overcome the natural and understandable tendencies towards fragmentation in Latin America has found one of its clearest expressions in the Andean Pact. In principle Canada supports any moves in Latin America towards economic or political cooperation. We have been for this reason a member for some time of the U.N. Economic Council for Latin America; we shall continue to support the Andean Pact and we have offered to cooperate in the technical development projects of SELA (Latin American Economic System); we are willing to look once again at the question of Canadian membership in the OAS (Organization of American States) once the Organization has decided what its future role should be.