

Worthy Mayor, Mr. President, honoured guests:

I am very pleased to be here in Montreal this evening on the eve of my inaugural address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Canada has been one of the strongest supporters of the United Nations from its inception, and the City of Montreal and the Province of Quebec have been home to many of the Canadians who have helped forge the links between Canada and the United Nations.

Montreal has been, as well, an excellent host for many international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and I join with the Mayor of Montreal in welcoming the Executive Committee of the World Federation of United Nations Associations this week to study the creation of a World Institute for the United Nations in this great city.

I would also like to recognize the fine work of your President, Maurice Strong, who epitomizes the energy and the dynamism of your Federation and its member associations. Maurice Strong continues the long record of support and service of Canada and Canadians to the United Nations and to the United Nations family.

Canadians have always been at the forefront of the United Nations -- we were one of the original 51 signatories to the UN Charter in San Francisco! And even in its darkest days -- and there were some -- Canada continued to support the ideals of the United Nations and to promote them throughout the world. In fact, Canadians invented the concept of peacekeeping.

Canadians and their unique set of values have played no small part in encouraging the growth and influence of the United Nations. People from around the world regard Canada as a living testimony to the benefits of a society steeped in the principles of social justice, tolerance, equity and respect for diversity. We have taken these principles to other important international organizations as well, such as the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, and the G-7, and they have allowed Canada to present a unique perspective that has ultimately fostered progress and harmony throughout the world. These principles are as important for Canadians at home as they are for the world community abroad.

Today is an important day in Canadian history. I know that as ardent supporters of the United Nations, you also follow closely the major political developments in its member nations. Like many other countries of the world, Canada is currently re-assessing its own internal political structures.

This morning, the Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, and the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs in Canada, Joe Clark -- my predecessor as Secretary of State for External