

Finally, I believe it is important to emphasize the requirement for partnership in the pursuit of democracy and human rights. Just as those goals demand action across a broad range of political, social and economic fronts, so too they will only be secured through partnerships within societies and partnerships between societies. That involves governments, business, labour unions, churches, international organizations, independent institutions and individuals.

That is why this Centre is so important. It can tap resources, develop links and initiate programs which can complement what others are doing in different ways. And the Centre will be able to do things which governments cannot do.

Central to success in what the Centre does will be its independence, something we sought to enshrine from the outset, something which cannot be challenged. That independence gives the Centre a vital freedom, a crucial credibility. It requires the government to respect its limits; it requires the Centre to respect its broad responsibility to the whole Canadian community concerned with human rights. Of course, that means there will be occasions on which the views expressed by this institution will not match those of the government. But it would be odd -- indeed perverse -- if that were not the case.

But while our paths may sometimes diverge, they are parallel paths, paths leading to the same destination. A world where human rights and democracy are celebrated not as goals but as realities, a world where rights are not the province of the few or the wealthy, but the province of all, a world where our children -- and children around the world -- might live in freedom and prosperity through justice without fear.

We Canadians sometimes denigrate our own accomplishments. And indeed, sometimes we have failed ourselves. But what we have built here is unique. We have built a country by inviting the world to come and share in our luck. We have built a democracy with millions who have fled tyranny and sought freedom. We have built a community through tolerance, through compromise, through understanding.

Others recognize the Canadian commitment to justice and human rights, the Canadian accomplishment. Nelson Mandela does. Soviet refuseniks do. The governments of China, of Sri Lanka, of Nicaragua, of Kenya, of Haiti have done. We can look to this Centre to carry that message forward in its own way -- a Canadian message, a message of persistence and insistence, but also one of help and hope. A message which will also remind us of our own achievements at home and push us on where we have yet to succeed.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I extend to you my best wishes for a challenging future, a future of opportunity and of hope, a future in which we all have a stake and which your efforts will make brighter.