

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour and a privilege to join you tonight and have the pleasure of speaking to you.

The Italian Chamber of Commerce has for a long time added a very special element to the Montreal social and business scene. Along with Sergio Momesso's team at the Forum, it has served to develop an impressive profile for the Italian community in this city.

I understand that you, Mr. Federici, and your organization have been very active in developing Italo-Canadian business contacts, not least through the investment mission that you sponsored to Italy last fall. That mission is already beginning to show results.

The business relations created by this sort of activity are what give substance to Canada's relations with Italy, and with the European Community. It is a very important dimension of Canadian policy to encourage the growth of these relations, and to provide an environment that helps our private sector take initiatives with Europe.

A foreign policy covers the full wide range of life. It touches every province, every city, every country, almost literally every question. Quite literally, some of those questions are life and death issues. Some of them affect the deepest convictions of Canadians - their deepest sense of who they are and of what they come from.

On a personal level I have greatly appreciated my collaboration with the Italian Foreign Minister, Signor Andreotti. He and I were, in fact, Prime Ministers together in 1979, but we both went on to better things. In foreign policy matters, Canada and Italy share a great deal in our outlook -- Italy has been a force for peace in areas of conflict on several continents - so has Canada - working together constructively with other like-minded countries. Canada and Italy also cooperate in a practical way in development assistance - in helping economies that need to grow set their roots and plan their way. For example, we are, for instance, both partners in the Momotomb Geo-Thermal Electric project in Nicaragua.

This Government gives a high priority to our relations with Italy and with Europe, and to securing a trade framework that will provide a secure basis for expanding relations with that continent.