

Mr. Chairman, members of the head table, distinguished foreign guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Since becoming Secretary of State for External Affairs earlier this year, I have had two opportunities to speak on the subject of the Pacific and Canadian foreign policy. But neither has matched the special privilege I enjoy tonight of delivering the keynote speech on the eve of this major Conference.

Over the next two days I foresee this event making a significant contribution to the development of better relations with this important part of the world which increasingly commands our interest and attention. The agenda reflects the vast scope of the subject; the slate of speakers and panellists is impressive; and the participants include prominent Canadians either involved already in the world of the Pacific and prepared to share their experiences, or drawn by a desire to learn more about this immense and complex region and its significance for Canada now and in the future.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your invitation to address this gathering. I hope that I can achieve a thought-provoking send-off for the proceedings of the next two days.

So much is being said at present about the economic dynamism of the Pacific region that to rehearse the statistics and cite the authorities on the area would be redundant in a gathering such as this. Suffice it to say that all observers are in agreement that the region has vast potential: in some forecasts, by the turn of the century, it could be the focus if not the engine of growth in the world economy.

Yet, while there is so much confidence in the economic future of the Pacific area, there is also some uncertainty about precisely what must be done to develop and direct the forces shaping the future for the maximum benefit of all countries in the region. How should we, as members of a vast and diverse neighbourhood organize ourselves to derive mutual advantage from the challenges of the future? As you know one important idea now in play is the notion of a "Pacific Community" organization constituted essentially to come to grips with economic problems in the first instance. Yet despite the considerable interest and momentum that has been built up in recent months, the concept has encountered and indeed generated a number of reservations, mainly political, which suggest that a structured community may take some time to shape. But the sense of community is there, and we must built on it.

To date, Canadians in the private sector, in government and in the academic world, have shown an active interest in helping to build this Pacific Community, and a readiness to participate in the evolution of the concept from the outset. All