

I am honoured to be able to open the 1994 annual conference of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) this evening and to welcome all of you to Canada, to British Columbia and to Vancouver. Canadians have long been associated with the work of the Institute. Indeed, former Prime Minister Lester Pearson was once president of the IISS. Tonight, I want to address the theme for this conference — "economics and strategy" — in fairly broad terms. I also want to speak about several other issues of critical concern to the Canadian government.

Most of us here this evening were educated and came of age during the Cold War. Our sense of what is important in international affairs, our understanding of the instruments required to meet our security needs, and even our strategic vision of the world, were grounded in the harsh realities of East-West confrontation. Our notion of security policy was a credible military deterrent, either as individual nations or through collective defence organizations like NATO. For many people, that threat — and that response — died with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union. And with the end of that threat, the conclusion is sometimes drawn that we should be less concerned about international affairs. Although international tragedies persist, they are often perceived as distant, localized events, posing little danger to us.

Indeed, if you ask Canadians the question — "What are we trying to secure?" — the answers would predictably be domestic in orientation. Our physical safety and well-being. The physical integrity of our country. Our pluralistic, multicultural society. Our rights and liberties, and our sense of responsibility to others. Our prosperity, and our support for those who are less well-off. I suspect that, if we posed that same question to others in different countries, representing a variety of cultures and backgrounds, the answers would be similar.

But, if we asked the next question — "What developments outside our borders threaten that security?" — the answers are likely to be global in nature. Pollution and environmental degradation. International crime. Drugs. Unchecked movements of peoples across frontiers. Disease. Resource scarcity. Loss of markets and international competitiveness. Excessive international arms sales and nuclear proliferation. Well down the list would come a reference to the traditional concerns of war as a threat to Canada's way of life. Gone entirely would be such views as "the communist menace."

Clearly, this is not the expression of narrow self-interest. Canadians worry about the dangers posed to their way of life by developments beyond our borders, such as those I briefly outlined. Canadians are not xenophobic. They remain open to the world. The streets of Vancouver are a vibrant reminder of the breadth of our culture and outlook. But Canadians also wonder where we are headed, and they quite naturally look to government to provide a lead.