

Thank you for your kind introduction. I'd like first to acknowledge the contribution to this event of the Canada-India Business Council, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, and, of course, the Indo-Canadian Business Club, which I gather has just recently received its charter. They have gone beyond their always welcome support for Indo-Canadian business arrangements to afford me this opportunity to talk to you today. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

I am delighted to be back in India. My wife and I have had numerous opportunities to travel in this beautiful and diverse country, and have developed a love of its culture and deep respect for its sturdy institutions. We admire also India's legendary resilience in the face of many storms and scourges, and have confidence in its future.

Let me open these remarks with what may seem a statement of the obvious, given the size and diversity of the Canadian delegation here: Canada is interested in India, always has been; but now, Canada is recognizing India as a valued partner for trade and investment.

Over the last half century, we have shared an enormous range of traditions and values: from our common roots in the British parliamentary tradition through active support for and participation in the Commonwealth and in the UN, and most recently, as like-minded signatories to the Uruguay Round of the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]. As your External Affairs Minister, Dinesh Singh, has noted, "We see eye to eye on many international issues. We are both multi-racial, multi-religious societies committed to the principles of democracy, secularism and political pluralism."

This commonality has led Canada and India to act in partnership on a host of issues. From 1954 to 1973, we worked together on International Peace Commissions in Indochina, where I myself, as a young foreign service officer, had the honour to serve. And, through the Commonwealth, we were leaders in the international effort to bring multi-racial democracy to South Africa.

We have collaborated closely in the Uruguay Round of the GATT, in the efforts to have the United Nations economic agenda expanded, on the environment, both through our bilateral economic co-operation programs and in international fora, and in a lively academic relations program, which is lately becoming much more closely tied to our economic partnership.

At the heart of these institutional relations lie deep personal bonds. Since the turn of the century, when immigrants from India first came to Canada, that human bridge has grown to over half-a-million Canadians of Indian descent. Their ranks include physicians, authors, educators, lawyers, businesspersons ... even