

Mr. Chairman,

It is with great pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to speak to you today about our country's relations with the State of Israel. Maureen and I have long admired Israel in both its ancient and modern forms. It is truly a land of miracles. We remember from our childhood the stories of the wisdom of the Kings, David and Solomon, and the words of the prophets. We studied as adults the rich history of the Jewish people and their vital spiritual and cultural gift to all of Western civilization.

We have been strongly impressed by the spirit of idealism that motivated and inspired the pioneers of Israel, the determination to create a society where the individual would be respected. Israel's vibrant democratic institutions and free press attest to the success of these pioneers.

We as Canadians, many of us descendants of pioneers ourselves, living in a young country, understand the place of these ideals in society. We share with Israelis a heritage of common values: freedom, democracy, justice and the rule of law.

This understanding, and the genuine admiration which Canadians have for Israel and its achievements, has been reflected in the longstanding firm commitment of successive Canadian governments, whether Conservative or Liberal, to Israel's security and well being. This has been a basic element in Canadian Middle East policy since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. It reflects, in a non-partisan manner, the views of Canadians that democratic societies deserve our firm support.

While Canadians and Israelis share many qualities and beliefs in common, there are many geographical and historical differences between us - and perhaps I should add climatic differences as well. Yet many of us know something of the cost and sacrifice to build a nation. We and our forebears have done that here. And we admire those Israelis who drained the marshes and made the desert bloom in the Holy Land.

Yet, as a multi-cultural nation, Canadians understand the difficulties as well as the very real benefits, that history can bestow on a pluralist society. This is, of course, a most appropriate occasion to reiterate the particularly rich contributions - intellectual, political, artistic and economic - made to our cultural mosaic by Canadians of the Jewish faith.

It is to me, as Secretary of State for External Affairs, of utmost importance to seek means to nurture the already strong and growing bilateral relationship between Canada and Israel. It is partly for this reason that I have invited Mr. Shamir, Israel's Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Ottawa as my guest. I had the opportunity to meet with him in New York after