

I am here to learn more about Venezuela, but also to talk about Canada. There is no denying the strength and impact in the world of the United States. Equally, there is no denying the strength and importance of other countries, other economies, other societies in this rich and diverse hemisphere. We are all countries of the new world who have chosen different ways to respond to the social, the economic, the political opportunities of the Americas. We should know one another better.

Canada and Venezuela both have large territories and relatively small populations. These realities necessitated at first a strong government presence in commercial and industrial projects in both countries. The government which I represent has recognized the unique advantages and efficiencies of the private sector and has now begun the process of divesting itself of these corporations; the Venezuelan Government is considering a similar approach to industrial development. Tomorrow we will visit Puerto Ordaz and the Guri Dam in the new and burgeoning industrial heartland of your country. Canadian companies have been major suppliers of equipment and technology to this important hydro-electric project. The Canadian businessmen here today are interested in specific opportunities to participate in Venezuelan development projects.

Yesterday Laboratorios Vargas and capsule technology of Canada signed a joint venture agreement which will permit the transfer of technology and equipment to produce rigid gelatin capsules in Venezuela. I have just come from a signing of a cultural Memorandum of Understanding with your foreign minister, Dr. Consalvi, which provides for the means to enhance and facilitate the exchange of cultural events between Canada and Venezuela.

But Canada's relations with Venezuela are not limited to bilateral matters. As I mentioned earlier, Venezuela/Canada interests in multilateral subjects mirror the diversity of our bilateral interests. Although not a member of the Contadora Group, Canada is providing support and encouragement to the search for peace in Central America. Venezuela, through the San Jose oil facility and Canada, through Caribbean, are assisting in promoting economic development in the Caribbean region. Both our countries are actively seeking ways to assist the new government in Guyana to overcome its economic problems.