

Mr. Hyndman, Mr. Seaborn, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends:

I am happy to be here with you this evening. Let me first thank the National Capital Chapter of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIIA) for its invitation. The Institute is, and for a number of years has been, an important partner of the Government's in the conducting of its foreign policy.

The Government recognizes and appreciates the work being done by the Institute. The communication, insight and education provided by your 23 chapters across Canada are a great help. With the capabilities that we have today for sending and receiving information, it is not enough simply to see the world and its problems; we must above all be able to understand them and assess their consequences. Organizations like yours assist Canadians to interpret this daily input. With today's international information overload, we can become numb to world events. However, we must realize that these far-off problems affect not just others, but us also. Hence the importance of a coherent, flexible foreign policy.

The review of foreign policy launched by the Government reflects our desire to involve Canadians in the decision-making process. We wish to raise the awareness of Canadians concerning foreign policy issues, since such issues affect us directly. The link between national and international policy is becoming increasingly important. In some areas, such as foreign overfishing, this link is easily seen. In others, such as our relations with China, it is not as clear, although very real.

Communication is an essential part of foreign policy. I say this because I believe we cannot be successful in the implementation of our foreign policy agenda if we fail to communicate it effectively to Canadians.

As you know, this government was elected on a firm commitment to engage Canadians and Parliament in the ongoing foreign policy process. Our foreign policy review is a reflection of this commitment. We want to raise awareness among Canadians about foreign policy issues because foreign policy affects them. Whether it is foreign overfishing, unfair trading practices or humanitarian crises, issues like these can and do shape the lives of Canadians.

Making an effort to raise awareness among Canadians about foreign policy issues is also necessary because the media is constantly bombarding us with information about world events. Without a basis for understanding Canada's view on these events, it is easy for people, including well-informed experts, to draw conclusions based solely on media reports. Our China policy is a case in point. This is why I welcome the opportunity to talk about some basic principles of Canada's foreign policy under the new government and to situate our relationship with China in that context.