

EXCERPTS FROM THE CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER, MR. TRUDEAU'S SPEECH AT THE  
OPENING OF THE HABITAT CONFERENCE IN VANCOUVER

COMMUNITY OF  
INTERESTS VITAL  
FOR MANKIND

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anadians will not soon forget the honour that has been given them in hosting Habitat. It has been our endeavour to demonstrate the appropriateness of that selection. From the inception of the United Nations in a neighboring city to the south, successive Canadian governments have lent with vigour support to the UN, its activities, and its international ideals. During the course of this conference, you will learn that in its size and the diversity of its geography, in the contrasts and harshness of its climate, and in its ethnic and cultural mosaic, Canada reflects to an appreciable degree the realities of today's world.

“...Canada can claim some originality in the techniques it has employed in housing its people, some value in its experience. It recognizes, nevertheless its deficiencies, and understands its need to learn more. We are ready to share these techniques and this value, and to learn in exchange from others. This country has been endowed with space and with natural resources. These form a wealth to enjoy and to administer for the benefit of future generations.

“...There is a newworld in the making, and a spreading awareness of that fact. No longer can there be a measure of fortune without an equal measure of responsibility. No nation can afford to isolate itself in self-contemplation, clasping to its breast its possessions in denial to others. Human demands require us to be more open with one another; modern technics, demand it. No longer is it possible—either morally or technically—not to be accountable. We have entered, willingly or otherwise, the era of a community of interest, vital to the survival of the species, that has brought us together here. To me, this is the meaning of this historic gathering.

“...Of all the factors that bear on this conference, I regard urgency to be as important as any. For too long, the relationship of Man to his environment, of Man as inhabitant of the planet, has been the subject of intellectual—and somewhat abstract—debate; considered to be the domain only of scientists, bureaucrats, and—on Sundays— theologians. It must pass to the people, to become a vehicle of human benefit, to become a symbol of hope for a richer and more wholesome life. To do so, urgency is required.



Prime Minister Mr. Trudeau

“...We are all asking ourselves that to do now, how to proceed immediately, in order to make our human settlements truly human, and at the same time to prevent further deterioration of the natural environment. We possess powerful political, economic, social and technical tools; we plan to make an inventory of them and examine in each case their possible application.

“...The concept of international cooperation is not new; it has been present in our minds for many years. My plea to you at the outset of this conference is to encourage that concept to descend to your guts, where thought can be leavened with passion, and accomplishment can become a reality. Altruism is not the most highly developed of international phenomena. But it does exist, it is real, and it is making progress and growing.

“...It is human nature to seek time to dwell on one's difficulties, to expose their roots to the light of reason, to minutely examine the fruits of every possible solution. Unfortunately, we do not have the time. All we can do is to cut back the foliage, to prune and trim, to try to combat the persistent resurgence of custom and tradition. No longer are we allowed the leisure of lingering. On one hand, the irrational roots in our gardens are too deep and too firmly entrenched to remove; on the other the seeds of reason which gave birth to human settlement and the fruits of knowledge and intelligence borne by them are so precious that to destroy them would be madness.

“...The stressful effects of living in confined areas, the deterioration of the social climate, the disintegration of rural life, the disappearance of farm lands through the spread of cities and their satellites, the widespread degradation of the environment, the destruction of present and future food sources, the disorganization of transportation, the overconsumption of energy, the exorbitant costs for services, the unbridled speculation and cut-throat competition—all these disorders play a part in the breakdown of human settlements.

“...Habitat will deal with numbers from its beginning to its end. The psychological problems raised by numbers are extremely serious. The simple existence of every individual is submerged in the co-existence of all; from now on we will all have to redefine ourselves in terms of a very close relationship with other groups and individuals—all of whom have become our neighbour. Our neighbour, who remained at a respectable distance from us until the last century, has been brought much closer through population growth, and we imagine how uncomfortably close he will come in the future. How are we going to tolerate this new neighbour in tomorrow's settlements? How will we put up with ourselves in the human beehive which was envisaged by Teilhard de Chardin and which is already well on its way to becoming a reality?

“...It is clear that in order to survive, we will be forced to socialize ourselves more and more. What is actually meant by “socializing”? From a human viewpoint, it means loving one another. We will thus have not only to tolerate one another, but to love one another in a way which will require of us an unprecedented desire to change our selves. Such a change will be more drastic than a major mutation of our species.

“...Love one another, or you will perish, writes Teilhard in *L'energie humaine*, adding that we have reached a critical point in human evolution in which the only path open to us is to move toward a common passion, a “conspiracy” of love.

“...The conspiracy of men with men and the conspiracy of the universe with an ever more just humanity; in this lies the salvation of human settlements and the hope held forth by Habitat.”

