

This is a consensus document in the best Canadian tradition; a coming together -- not without pain -- of an incredible diversity of views. This is no small achievement, and it is an illusion to think that this can happen again in our generation.

This Charlottetown agreement is fair, it is honourable, and it is inclusive.

As a Canadian -- not as a woman, or as a Torontonionian, or as a Progressive Conservative -- but as a Canadian, I will be campaigning very hard in support of the "YES" side in the referendum and I know that I can count on your support.

I know from my own 17 months as Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs that the world is watching us very carefully -- not only because they are interested in Canada's future, but because they are interested in their own future as well.

They are watching because Canada has always held a unique and privileged position in the world as an honest broker, a respected mediator, a brave peacekeeper. Canada is renowned as a country of tolerance, justice, equality, opportunity and respect for individual diversity.

If Canada fails in its efforts to renew itself, what hope is there for a country where democracy is merely an idea hidden away and stifled by a repressive regime?

On the other hand, if Canada succeeds, what positive signals are sent to the world about the possibilities for peaceful and prosperous co-existence?

Canada is a very special country. By our principles and by our actions, we have been an example to the world community. Our leaders from Lester Pearson to John Diefenbaker to Brian Mulroney have produced an enormous and unbroken record of service to the nations of the world, far beyond our relative size as a country. The reverse is also true. Should we fail and our country turn inward or break apart, what power will these fragments have to serve or to influence -- or even guard their own interests?

Over the next few months, I will be travelling across Canada to emphasize our role in the world: why the world is important to us and why a strong Canada is important to the world. These discussions will be held with so-called "ordinary" Canadians -- and I use that term with great respect -- because what we call "ordinary" in Canada, the world deems to be "extraordinary," and I want to ensure that our stature is as well-known at home as it is at international meeting places.