

Mr. Vice-President, Senora Guerrero, Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests, Colleagues:

Maureen and I are pleased to welcome you, on behalf of the Government of Canada, on your first official visit to this country. I know that your Ambassador has ensured that you will have had the opportunity to meet a large number of Canadians in Ottawa and Toronto. I have seen your program and it has that 'fully loaded' appearance that I thought had been exclusively designed for some of my visits. I wish you 'courage' as you make your way through it. However, I believe that you will be well received, and I hope that the visit will prove to be rewarding for you personally and for Canada/Nicaragua relations.

From our point of view, the timing of your visit is excellent. You are one of the major participants in the Central America peace process, and I look forward to receiving a first-hand account of this process and its prospects. You are also the senior government representative on the National Reconciliation Commission, set up under the peace plan, and we all appreciate the priority you are giving Canada in taking time away from these critically important activities to visit us.

From the many Canadian visitors that you receive: journalists, persons from the church and NGO communities and ordinary Canadians seeking to inform themselves about the crisis and the nature of your revolution - you will know that you have an attentive Canadian audience.

You, your Sandinista colleagues, your many compatriots who do not belong to that Party, and, indeed, some who are now ranged in opposition to you, successfully created a revolution. In terms of Nicaragua's past and the long dark Somoza dynasty, we share your view that the revolution is irreversible. But yours is also a revolution whose internal dynamics and long-term orientation cannot but give rise to a measure of concern. I would not be faithfully representing my government and numerous Canadians were I to gloss over this delicate matter. I earnestly desire to enlarge my understanding of Nicaragua in our discussions tomorrow and, of course, during my visit to your country in November.

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