

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to pay tribute to the 40th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which has been a cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy for successive Canadian governments. What we celebrate is not only 40 years of uninterrupted peace in Europe but also the values which brought us together then and which still unite us today.

When he signed the treaty on behalf of Canada, the Right Honourable Lester Pearson stated:

"This treaty, though born out of fear and frustration, must, however, lead to positive social, economic and political achievements which will extend beyond the time of emergency which gave it birth, or the geographic area which it now includes."

We must keep in mind the situation prevailing at that time: fully armed Soviet troops were still stationed in Europe; the West Berlin blockade was on; a Communist takeover had just crushed Czechoslovakia's nascent democracy; and the nations of Western Europe, barely through with the war, were openly threatened by a similar fate. There is a striking contrast with the prosperous times we are experiencing today, and NATO has been and still is an essential instrument of such progress.

The unity and determination of the Alliance have often been put to the test: recurrent troubles in Eastern Europe, the uprising in Hungary, the Suez Canal crisis, the crushing of Prague's springtime demonstrations, detente in the Seventies, Afghanistan and the double decision. In every instance NATO came through stronger and more relevant.

Today NATO provides for the common security of over 600 million people in 16 nations on both sides of the Atlantic. The modern era is marked by conflict, yet Europe, the region with the highest concentration of sophisticated weaponry in the world, is enjoying the longest sustained period of peace and stability since the height of the Holy Roman Empire. That peace was made possible through NATO's persistent commitment to pursue complementary goals: first, to maintain adequate defences to deter aggression; second, to control and limit armaments through carefully negotiated and verifiable agreements; and third, to constantly promote dialogue with the countries of eastern Europe.

Has the Alliance met the test that Lester Pearson set for it 40 years ago? Has it led to positive social, economic and political achievements? Is it more than just a military alliance? Clearly the answer is yes to all questions.