

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires
extérieures

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AS DELIVERED

AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE
ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE CANADIAN BUREAU
FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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I want to thank the Canadian Bureau for International Education for sponsoring this event today and for including me in it. I very much appreciate your work over the past 26 years as a bridge to Canada for foreign students and a bridge to the world for Canadian students. Your motto, "Education without borders or bounds," is singularly apt for today's post-Cold War context, as nations seek new ways, not always very successfully, to secure peaceful and productive alliances.

However, this conference can contribute to successful new alliances by addressing the relationships between education and trade, key factors for global prosperity. It also implicitly recognizes the value of co-operation, sharing and even compassion for fellow human beings -- qualities that can ensure the long-term stability of any international relationship.

Obviously the conference objective is based on idealism. Thus this conference has a foundation of idealism, but it is also of practical assistance as Canadians try to make their way in today's world, with its seemingly relentless rivalries and intractable battles. The simple fact is that emerging developments in technology, trade and investment tie our fate to that of other nations and other individuals. Those ties can be positive or negative.

In the positive sense, Saskatchewan has long understood the ties that bind. Nowhere in Canada has the co-operative movement been stronger. Nowhere in Canada have communities been more successful in pooling their resources and working in common cause, whether through the wheat pool, the credit union movement or universal health care, all of which were essentially invented here. Even the Roughriders are owned and operated by the community -- everybody's a quarterback!

Simply put, in Saskatchewan, co-operation, sharing and compassion are a way of life.

The world, and Canada, can use more of this kind of inventiveness, this kind of co-operation in these turbulent times.

No individual, no community and no country can expect to "go it alone" in the world of the 1990s. We are more than ever an integral part of the global community. This is as true for our universities as it is for our industries. In fact, no matter what the issue is -- environment, trade, security, culture or education -- what happens abroad has a direct and far-reaching impact on our lives here at home -- as, I may say, our actions have on others'.

Here, in the landlocked heart of our nation, this is well recognized. With an economy heavily dependent on exports and a population very close to and proud of its immigrant roots,

Saskatchewan has always been aware of the importance of world events to local people. Examples:

- The South Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation and the National Farmers' Union have shared their skills with distant communities in other lands.
- The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College established a leadership training program here in Saskatoon for Native leaders from Central America.

These activities respond to and shape our continuing efforts at the federal level to link Canada and Canadians to their foreign counterparts.

One reason I am pleased to be here today is to dispel any notion that Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs deals only with foreign issues -- and that domestic issues are parked over here somewhere. In reality, what I am attacking every day and what I deal with are Canadian issues, that is, the rights, concerns, needs and aspirations of Canadians as they are affected by -- and affect -- international situations and developments.

Our foreign service officers, for example, do not spend their entire lives going to elegant diplomatic receptions. At a very practical level, Canada's network of embassies around the world helps hundreds of thousands of Canadians every year in a thousand different ways -- whether it is information, guidance or assistance with a business project -- sometimes in life-threatening situations. Our posts are rallying points for Canadians, and, indeed, I would encourage you to make use of them.

When Canadians want to sell their products or services in distant and unfamiliar markets, our trade commissioners are there to advise, to put them in touch with the right people and to make the right arrangements. In fact, even before Canadian exporters go abroad, they can get services, information and advice from our International Trade Centres, right here in Saskatoon, for example. Even in Regina!

When Canadian academics, researchers and students want to work with foreign counterparts, we help make the necessary introductions and arrangements.

There is no great mystery about foreign policy. As a former British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs once said, "Foreign policy is something that you have to bring down to its essence as it applies to the individual. It is not something that is great and big; it is common sense and humanity as it applies to my affairs and yours...."

Ultimately, it is the impact that we have on the individual citizen -- here and in other countries -- that must be the supreme test of our words or actions, our success or failure.

Our foreign policy is very much geared to the interests and values of individuals. Key among these values are

- the conviction that democratic values and institutions, and respect for human rights, are universal and are essential to social and economic progress in any country;
- an unshakable commitment to the rule of law;
- insistence on responsible decisions by duly elected governments, and responsive and accountable programs by public administrators;
- a fundamental belief in the virtues of the free and orderly movement of people, ideas, goods, services and capital;
- the willingness to share our wealth and expertise with less fortunate countries to help them on the road to development and prosperity; and
- the resolve to assume our fair share of the responsibility for peace and security in the community of nations.

These clearly are ideals -- noble objectives that we adhere to in times when ideals seem stuck behind some opaque cloud and objectives seem far from achievable. The same is true at home: strong values and noble objectives, obscured by very real problems and everyday concerns. But let us remind ourselves that these values have brought us a long way -- at home and internationally. These are the same values that Canadians have used to build our own communities, our own country -- to give ourselves and our children, for all our difficulties, a quality of life that is second to none.

I am struck by how many countries see Canada as a model of freedom and justice and respect for diversity -- and, not surprisingly, a model they wish to emulate. It is amazing when I am abroad how often I am asked, "How do you do it?" "Can you help?" "Can you send us someone?"

One of the greatest challenges we face in today's world is the need to help people of Central and Eastern Europe consolidate their new-found political, social and economic freedom. Many of these countries are on a roller coaster of change. They need principles and skills, structures and institutions, constant work -- all at once -- when we have had the luxury of time in building our human rights, our economy and our democracy.

Canadians are providing many of these necessities through our Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe. Working closely with non-governmental organizations throughout Canada, the Task Force has launched hundreds of projects for democratic development in a cost-effective way and without creating a vast bureaucracy.

For example, in collaboration with the Canadian Bar Association, bilateral projects have been set up in Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Federated Republics and Ukraine to strengthen their legal systems and judiciaries. Courses for Central and East European judges and parliamentarians have been funded, and arrangements have been made for lawyers from several Central and East European countries to do internships with Canadian law firms.

But these countries also need practical technology to transport and distribute food, organize an efficient financial system and achieve some minimum level of environmental protection. Canadians (including from Saskatchewan) are helping here, too.

- The University of Saskatchewan and Meta Technologies of Saskatoon are co-operating with the University of Chernivtsi in southwestern Ukraine to establish a Centre for Western Business Concepts and Business English.
- A mission of credit union officials went to Ukraine recently to explore the possibility of organizing credit unions and providing them with technical assistance. (Among the mission participants was Bill Zerebsky, General Manager of the New Community Savings and Credit Union Ltd. of Saskatoon.)
- TDI Project Ltd. of Saskatoon has undertaken a feasibility study with a Polish joint-venture partner to examine the development of ethanol fuel plants using feedstock agricultural wastes.
- A demonstration of an agricultural extension service is being organized in southern Russia, by Saskatoon-based West Canadian Agricultural Development Company, Ltd.

All of these projects are directly relevant to the needs of emerging democracies and economies in Central and Eastern Europe. They also involve the transfer of basic democratic and economic skills and knowledge -- the foundation for any long-term stability in a country.

Education and skills transfer clearly fit right into these objectives -- hence, the Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe's provision of \$2 million to the CBIE for its work in Ukraine -- over and above funds from the Canadian International Development Agency for the CBIE's work with foreign students.

In Kiev, the CBIE, local government and the Institute of Public Administration are establishing a Management Training Institute for government officials and a Master of Public Administration degree program. This will undoubtedly benefit both countries and illustrates that building on values can also enhance our interests.

We cannot measure the economic benefits of these new links with Poles, Ukrainians, Czechs and other East Europeans, but we know that, ultimately, they will be substantial.

It is also in our own interest to do everything that we can to consolidate democracy and help stabilize Central and Eastern Europe. A stable, peaceful Central and Eastern Europe is vital to peace and security in Europe as a whole.

Canadians are all too familiar with the consequences of instability and conflict in that part of the world. The rapid disintegration in the former Yugoslavia is an ominous reminder that democratic structures, and respect for human rights, do not come easily and cannot be taken for granted.

Even here at home, our democracy requires vigilance. And our competitive strength depends more and more on investing in our own people.

Canada is a modern, advanced, industrial nation. With only the 31st largest population in the world, we have the seventh largest economy and the second highest standard of living. Last year, the United Nations reported that, in terms of overall quality of life, we were number one among all the nations of the world.

We did not get this far by being closed and insular. We did not become a member of the Group of Seven Industrialized Nations (G-7), and a highly respected country in all the major councils of the world, by turning our backs on the world. Quite the opposite, we have become successful by being active players in the community of nations.

We are founding members of the United Nations and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and we are active in virtually all major multilateral institutions.

We negotiated the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement because, in today's global economy, it is essential to look competition squarely in the eye.

It would be fatal to an export-dependent economy like ours if we were, instead, to bury our heads in the sand. I am preaching to the converted when I underline that to maintain our ability to compete, to generate exports and high-skill jobs, we must develop our technology and knowledge base more rapidly. We can do that,

first by fostering more productive and focused relationships among governments, industries and universities, and second by strengthening networks between our institutions of higher education and those of key partners such as Europe, the United States and Japan.

There can be no such thing as splendid isolation for our universities, any more than there can be splendid isolation for any region or any country.

If we are to move forward -- in engineering, computer sciences, communications and transportation -- we must be systematically linked to the best in the United States, Asia and Europe.

If our post-secondary institutions are to compete effectively for first-rate students and professors, we must develop our international connections and ensure that the quality of our teaching and research meets the highest international standards.

That is why, when I was in Brussels last December, my European Community counterpart and I initiated this round table on European and Canadian higher education and training programs.

I want to thank the CBIE for providing the venue and expertise for this initiative. It is the kind of initiative we had in mind when we signed the Transatlantic Declaration with the European Community in November 1990.

Other similar activities are also under way, such as the trilateral conference held in Wingspread, Wisconsin, last month, which considered ways of improving co-operation in higher education among Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Let me assure you that Canada will continue to do what it can to maintain and develop bridges to foreign academic communities. This includes support for Canadian studies programs in foreign universities.

It also means playing an active role in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC). It is also important for Canada to recognize the sources of its own strength. That strength lies in the ability of generation after generation of Canadians to build a prosperous democracy by reaching out to each other and looking outward around the world.

The India Express of New Delhi recently observed, "The strength of Canadian society is that it produces people who would fight for the cause of those to whom they do not belong, culturally or economically."

If ever we needed to call on that strength, we need to do it now. This is a country that has always said "YES" to each other.

"YES" -- (as we settled this land) -- we will help you to clear that field, or build a new barn if yours has burned.

"YES" -- we will help if you have a bad year in the mines or in the fishery.

"YES" -- we accept your right to speak your own language and develop your own cultures.

"YES" -- we will sit together and work out ways to accommodate each other's visions for Canada -- peacefully and honourably.

And this is a country that has always said "YES" to the world.

"YES" -- we will provide our brave sons and daughters to make peace and to keep the peace.

"YES" -- we will share our wealth and expertise with others who are less fortunate.

"YES" -- we will commit ourselves to international treaties and be bound by their provisions.

"YES" -- we will take our place at the United Nations, the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, the G-7, the Organization of American States, the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance -- whenever and wherever we can be a force for peace and progress in the world.

October 26 is an important day for Canada, but it is also an important day for the world community because we are, as a country, a world standard for the promotion and protection of human rights; the development of democratic values and institutions; and the provision of responsible and responsive government and public administration.

The world truly is watching Canada.

We must overcome our differences and say "yes" to Canada. There will be no second chance. The world has other preoccupations. It has become too unforgiving for those countries that cannot recognize their own strengths.

Canada's strength lies in our own historic values and unity, built one step at a time over 200 years.