

TOWARDS THE AMERICAS OF THE YEAR 2005: DEMOCRACY, DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY

Speech delivered during the Luncheon hosted by the Primer of Canada

**Speech by the Primer of Canada
The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien**

Check against delivery

Mr. President Charbonneau,
Mr. Prime Minister of Québec,
Mr. The Secretary General of the Organization of American States,
Speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons,
Government ministers,
Madame Lieutenant-Governor of Québec,
Parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure for me -- as Prime Minister of Canada -- to welcome you to Quebec City for the first-ever Conference of Parliamentarians of the Americas.

This Conference marks an opportunity to extend and improve relations among the nations of the Western Hemisphere. And I wish to convey my appreciation to the Quebec National Assembly for being your host.

Our common history has been one of discovery. First the Old World discovering the New. And now -- as we each have gained our own identity and maturity -- we are reaching out to one another in a modern voyage of discovery. To learn more about each other. To understand and appreciate our differences. To celebrate our common values.

I can think of no better setting for this gathering than Quebec City. As you will no doubt already know, this is one of the most beautiful cities in Canada. But it is a special kind of beauty. A beauty that comes from a unique blend of the old and the new.

Quebec City was one of the earliest European settlements in our country. The pioneers who came here were inspired by their vision of a new and better life. And it was from this place -- and others like it from Baffin Island to Tierra del Fuego -- that our common adventure of hemispheric discovery first began.

I am also pleased that you can be here at this particular time in our history. It gives you -- our hemispheric neighbours -- a first-hand look at the renewed sense of national optimism that has come from our own successful battle against the deficit and the renewed growth our economy is experiencing.

Once again, Canada is a confident, outward-looking player in the community of nations and the global economy. We are seeking new relationships that build on historic ties with the Old World and our great and close friend the United States. We are exploring new links with Asia. And

more and more, we are looking for new opportunities in the Americas.

Geography has made Canada a country of the Americas. History -- and especially recent history -- has seen a steadily growing sense among Canadians that our future is closely linked to that of our neighbours in the hemisphere.

We have cultural ties of long-standing. They have been stimulated by the settling in Canada of people from all over the hemisphere; as well as by educational exchanges, sports and tourism. And all Canadians are looking forward to the 1999 Pan-American Games in Winnipeg.

Our 1990 decision to join the Organization of the American States (OAS) showed our desire to be a more active player in the hemisphere. And I am, indeed, pleased that we will host the OAS General Assembly in the year 2000.

In 1994, I had the privilege of representing Canada at the Miami Summit of the Americas. The Summit saw the drawing of a historic blueprint for deeper hemispheric integration.

Your presence here takes this process one step further. It shows that the basic principles that we strongly endorsed in Miami are taking hold and flourishing.

During your work this week, you will exchange information and establish friendships. You will seek to build on what was achieved in Miami in various ways:

to preserve and strengthen democracy and respect for human rights;

to promote prosperity through economic integration and free trade;

to eradicate poverty and discrimination;

and to achieve sustainable development as the basis for social stability and economic prosperity.

For Canada, the key to fostering democratic development -- in all of its facets -- is the creation of a framework for economic prosperity. History teaches us that freedom is always in peril where there is no freedom from want. Poverty and despair are always fertile ground for the forces of reaction and despotism.

With the emergence of a truly global economy, there is now a common understanding -- in the Western Hemisphere and beyond -- that enhanced trade and investment flows are the engines of economic growth and prosperity. And Canada is living proof.

We have always been a trading nation. We developed quickly because we opened our doors to foreign technologies. By adapting these technologies to our unique environment, we achieved one of the highest standards of living in the world. With prosperity as our foundation, we acted on the common Canadian belief in the value of helping each other by building a social safety net that is one of our proudest national achievements.

We have enjoyed the benefits that come with freer trade. That is why we have championed trade liberalization globally and in the region. I firmly believe that the free trade agreements we have

already entered into with the United States, Mexico and Chile are just the beginning. We are deeply committed to following through on the Miami commitment to the establishment of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Canada firmly believes in a FTAA of "many amigos;" many of whom are here today. We are committed to launching formal negotiations next April at the second Summit of the Americas in Chile.

As a complement to the FTAA, we are also exploring an enhanced trade relationship with MERCOSUR. I discussed this with President Cardoso of Brazil earlier this year and I remain strongly committed to it.

This momentum must be maintained. Canada is convinced that a comprehensive, rules-based trading system -- with all our hemispheric neighbours as members -- will be a major boost for trade. We believe it will provide greater security for trade, investment and technology transfer. And, most importantly, we believe it will lead to a better life for all our peoples.

The Western Hemisphere is a region of growing economic dynamism.

And it gives me great pleasure to announce to you today that I will be leading a Team Canada Mission to the region early in the New Year.

Provincial premiers, territorial leaders and the leaders of Canadian municipalities will join me. As will an impressive group of Canadian business leaders. Together we will travel to Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile from January 11-23. Our Minister for International Trade -- who is with us today -- has just returned from meetings with his counterparts from three of the four countries that Team Canada will be visiting.

The Team Canada approach has been a remarkably successful one for Canada. Three Team Canada missions I have led to Asia -- as well as another trade mission to Latin America -- have brought home more than \$20 billion in new agreements for Canadian business.

They have demonstrated to Asian government and business leaders our commitment to Asian markets. They have raised awareness of Canadian capabilities and expertise in the Asia Pacific region and around the world. They have anchored Canada in the Asia Pacific.

It is my strong belief that Team Canada will have the same positive impact on our trade relations with our hemispheric neighbours. Like your presence here at this conference, it will be one more step in the unfolding voyage of discovery that -- every day -- is bringing us closer together as friends and neighbours.

I wish each and every one of you a most enjoyable and productive stay in Quebec City.