

## **“Celebrating Canada’s Birthday” 2003**

### **SPEECH FOR HEADS OF MISSION FOR CANADA DAY**

Dear guests, dear friends!

First of all, thank you for coming to celebrate the birthday of our country, Canada. It is always with great pride and emotion that we celebrate what we have become as a people and what we have accomplished, not only over the past year, but throughout our history.

Since its birth 136 years ago, Canada has been a land of promise. Over the decades, we have built a society that celebrates excellence and is motivated by a deep respect for democracy and human rights. Today, we are proud to highlight our success, the product of a bold vision and the noble values handed down to us by our ancestors. That success is now being expressed in practically every language, thanks to the contributions of new Canadians.

We are also proud of our awe-inspiring natural heritage. You know about Canada’s breathtaking natural beauty, our majestic Rocky Mountains, vast forests, untamed North, thousands of lakes and rivers, and rich plant and animal life. Protecting this unique environment is important to us, which is why we have ratified the Kyoto Protocol and are taking steps to ensure the ecological integrity of our country for current and future generations. It is also why our government has chosen the theme **“Celebrating Canada’s Natural Beauty”** for this year’s Canada Day celebrations.

Canada Day is also an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on the future and look ahead with confidence and enthusiasm. On the economic front in particular, we have succeeded in recent years in putting our fiscal house in order and accelerating trade. These measures have been a powerful stimulus to growth, propelling Canada to the forefront of the G8. The federal government has recorded a budget surplus for the sixth consecutive year and we anticipate further surpluses over the next few years. Our foreign debt has shrunk considerably, job creation remains strong, and our manufacturing industry, particularly in the high-tech sector, is growing rapidly.

This exceptional performance was noted by the G8 leaders at their most recent Summit in Évian, France, at the beginning of June. It is noteworthy that the G8 leaders said they were inspired by our performance and want to institute in their respective countries the kinds of measures and reforms that have proven themselves.

We are obviously very proud that our success is inspiring other governments. Canada has long prided itself on its international leadership role in such areas as peacekeeping operations, the protection of human rights, and international development. That we are now becoming an economic model only reinforces our conviction that we have made the right choices, even though they have sometimes involved sacrifices. But that is the price we have paid to turn our economy around and ensure a better future for generations to come.

What will this future be built on? First and foremost, on a quality of life enhanced by better education, improved health care, rewarding jobs, better environmental protection, cleaner and more efficient technologies, greater prosperity, and above all, equal opportunities for all.

I mentioned our international role. We are proud to champion multilateralism. Canada is the only G8 country that is a member of every major international organization. Whether it be the United Nations, the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, the Organization of American States, APEC, or other major international bodies, Canada is present and stands in solidarity for peace and prosperity in the world. This ongoing commitment is demonstrated through imaginative and constructive diplomacy based on cooperation, mediation and support for the less fortunate.

We also play a leading role in promoting cultural diversity in the world. This reflects the Canadian reality, where bilingualism and multiculturalism are an integral part of our national policies. It is also noteworthy that an increasing number of countries are looking to Canada for inspiration in redefining their policies on integration and minorities. In Canada, it is important that newcomers preserve their cultural identity while integrating harmoniously into Canadian society. We firmly believe that in this age of globalization, it is vitally important that we protect the cultural identity of peoples and actively promote the richness of cultures.

In closing, I hope you are able to visit Canada some day, take in its natural beauty, enjoy warm Canadian hospitality, and appreciate our rich cultural diversity. You can also travel by surfing the Internet and visiting the Government of Canada Web site, [canada.gc.ca](http://canada.gc.ca), and the Department of Canadian Heritage site, [www.pch.gc.ca](http://www.pch.gc.ca), where you will find all of the relevant information on Canada and all of the useful links for planning a real or virtual journey.

I am sure that such a visit to Canada will be an unforgettable one to a wonderful country, my country, our country. **Long live Canada! Happy Canada Day!**