

**NOTES FOR A SPEECH
BY PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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TO THE CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA
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It's a pleasure to be here to discuss our Government's foreign policy with such a distinguished group of Canadians.

When I was asked by Prime Minister Harper to work with Peter MacKay on our international relations, I was delighted. Foreign policy is a rich, complex and challenging area, and throughout my public life I have sought out intellectual challenges.

Looking back at the last federal election, if we had to rate what Canadians were telling us the ten most important political priorities were, then I think we could all agree that foreign policy was probably about eleventh.

Indeed, the Government was elected on its platform of five priorities and, as you know, foreign affairs was not one of them. Elections are about what's on the minds of Canadians and government is about implementing the priorities it has set out and on which it has been elected.

But foreign policy doesn't suddenly stop as a result of being out of the top five. The world doesn't stop for Canada and its elections or for anyone. We need to address the international events and developments that lie squarely in our country's real interests.

That is a more constant drumbeat than Canadians may think. Look at the past few months. From Afghanistan to the Middle East to the recent APEC Summit in Vietnam, foreign policy has been right at the top of the Canadian political agenda.

Being at the top of the agenda doesn't mean that foreign policy is entirely predictable, however.

We have many international laws in place and many practical ways of getting things done that many important countries subscribe to. But that is a far cry from saying it is under control by any one country, or group of countries, or international institutions. We see this most noticeably when dramatic changes occur seemingly overnight that clearly do not fit within the normal parameters of international affairs.

We see this with the degree to which terrorism has disrupted our lives. Governments like ours want to keep travel and trade and commerce as open as possible, but fanatics can create enormous difficulties. Even though terrorism has been with us internationally for decades, we still cannot predict with full confidence, as 9/11 demonstrated so tragically, what may be waiting for us just around the corner.

Canada is a secure and prosperous country, a long way from most of the world's hot spots. But Canadians are not an inward and isolationist people. We care and care deeply about events in every corner of the world. Some of this may be explained by the fact that Canadians come from every corner of the world.

But that is only part of the story. The reality is far broader and far more impressive. We have church groups supporting orphanages in AIDS-devastated countries in sub-Saharan Africa. We have community leaders travelling to developing countries often on a purely volunteer basis to help local civil society groups. On Darfur, the greatest support for the government's continued work for an effective international solution has come from Canadian Jewish groups, whose memory of the holocaust has only deepened their determination to help stop the atrocities in Sudan.

We see Canadian concern most dramatically when events erupt suddenly, as happened last summer with the war in Lebanon.

In short there is a substantial body of Canadians that follow international events closely and continuously. They and, I would argue, many ordinary Canadians want their government to be active leaders on the international stage. They want leadership but not just that. They want principled leadership in foreign policy.

Faced with these and other pressures, how should a government approach foreign policy? The answer is to establish a few clear principles and then to stick to them to the fullest extent possible and in every circumstance.

Our operational principles can be boiled down to three clear precepts.

First, the stakes for Canada must be clear. The issue must engage Canadian values and interests. At a time when there are so many pressing demands on our time and resources - We have to be clear about why we are interested, and clear about what we think should be done.

When we came into office, we felt that Canada had been coasting internationally for too many years, lecturing from the rostrum but not doing enough in the field to back up our words with action. So the second precept is you have to pull your weight in international affairs.

Third, if you give your word, keep your word. When Canada says we are going to do something, we do it. In international politics as in our domestic affairs, a Canadian government's word has to mean something.

These operational principles are not plucked out of thin air. We believe they reflect deeply held Canadian values that helped shape this country and make it what it is today.

As for our substantive principles B the ideas that motivate us, that describe the goals toward which we are working in the world the Prime Minister has made them very clear, both in word and deed.

Politically, we are committed to the spread of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Economically, we believe that open trade and financial systems offer the greatest hope of prosperity to the greatest number of people around the world. Morally, we believe that wealthy countries like Canada have a clear obligation to help the less fortunate find their own ways toward greater well-being for all their citizens.

What makes ours a more effective foreign policy for Canada's interests and Canadians is that we have integrated substantive principles with the three operational principles of clarity, commitment and integrity.

The evidence is there on the major issues we as a government have faced.

In the fight against terrorism, we are making sure that Canada does not serve as a base for terrorism against other countries.

The Tamil Tigers are a terrorist organization. For many years, their supporters in Canada were allowed far too free a hand in raising funds to support their activities in Sri Lanka. We put a stop to that. We have listed LTTE as a terror group, and it is illegal in Canada for anyone to participate in the group's activities.

In the Middle East, some critics have claimed we departed from traditional Canadian positions regarding the region. I disagree. We still hold to the fundamental points of long-standing Canadian policy, including support for a two-state solution achieved through negotiations as part of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace settlement. We support the Roadmap to the Middle East peace proposed by the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations.

What has changed is our unequivocal and quick response to the creation of a Hamas-dominated Palestinian government. Hamas is listed as a terrorist entity under Canadian legislation. Its conduct is a serious impediment to peace. We have consistently called on Hamas to renounce violence,

recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept previous agreements, such as the Oslo Accords and the Roadmap for Peace.

Given this clarity of purpose, no one should be surprised that we suspended Canadian government funding to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. Our decision will not change until Hamas changes.

We make a distinction, however, between assistance to the Palestinian Authority and humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people. Our humanitarian support is continuing through multilateral and non-governmental organizations, and is closely monitored to avoid any risk of diversion to Hamas or any other terrorist groups.

When Hezbollah attacked Israeli soldiers and civilians last summer, we supported Israel's right to defend itself. People criticized us and called for us to be more neutral on the conflict.

I find this demand distressing. Where is the neutral ground between Israel's right to exist and Hezbollah's terrorist attacks on it? This government believes that neutrality on such a fundamental point is tantamount to saying that we don't care whether Israel survives or not.

But we do care. We do care that Israel's right to live in peace and security is recognized by all its neighbours and by every other nation in the world. Steadfast support for Israel's right to exist is a fundamental principle of this government. And we stand by our principles.

On Afghanistan. We knew from the beginning it would be difficult. We have seen fine young Canadians pay the ultimate price in the service of their country. We feel these losses deeply, and the entire nation mourns our fallen.

As Canadians, we must not only live by our principles and values, but we must act on them. It is our responsibility to support the Afghan people in their quest to establish a society that is founded on freedom, democracy and universally accepted human rights, the same core values that we as Canadians enjoy.

The Afghan government has asked for international help, and they are getting it. The United Nations has mounted its largest political mission in the world in Afghanistan. Approximately 31,000 troops from 37 countries participate in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. Over 60 countries are contributing to Afghanistan's development B Canada among them.

The challenges in Afghanistan require an integrated effort that builds security, democratic governance, humanitarian assistance, and real development. All are linked and all are critical to the success of the mission in Afghanistan. But security is fundamental. Without it, everything else can quickly be brought to nothing. That is why a substantial Canadian troop presence there is so necessary, especially in confronting the insurgents in the southern region.

Our engagement in Afghanistan is not solely military. We subscribe very strongly to the view that for this country to get on its feet and function as a free and democratic society, security, reconstruction and assistance must go together.

Afghanistan is Canada's largest recipient of bilateral development assistance. Last May, Prime Minister Harper announced an additional \$310 million in development funding for Afghanistan (2006-07), bringing Canada's total contribution to nearly \$1 billion over 10 years (from 2001 to 2011).

To cite just one example among many, Canada has been funding Afghanistan's national micro-credit program. This program is based on the same principles that have won Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank he founded in Bangladesh this year's Nobel Peace Prize. Canada's contribution to micro-credit in Afghanistan has meant that many Afghan women, including widows brutally relegated to the margins of society by the Taliban, are now able to support themselves and their families.

Despite the challenges that remain in rebuilding a society sorely abused

and destroyed by years of Taliban oppression and violence, we are seeing real progress throughout the country. Twelve million Afghans registered nationwide to vote in elections in 2004 and 2005 ^B and over 60% actually did vote, despite dangers and difficulties far beyond what any of us could imagine when we go to the polls.

The work in Afghanistan is not over, by any means. Prime Minister Harper and Minister MacKay are in Latvia this week at the NATO Summit to make exactly this point that now is not the time to abandon the Afghan people or lose our resolve to bring our mission there to a successful conclusion.

Only by our presence, our example, our determination and our assistance, financial, and military can we show the Afghan people that they are not being abandoned and that their choices count. They voted for prosperity, they voted for security and they voted for governance based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.

That is what we are aiming for in Afghanistan. That is why Canadian soldiers and others from around the world ^B are risking their lives to make a better future for the Afghan people. That is why Canada needs to do its part to get the job done.

And finally, I would like to talk about one of the key pillars in our foreign policy - standing up for human rights.

- Our Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and our Government are committed to standing up for human rights - both here at home and around the world.
- Our government has brought the strong Canadian values of democratic development, human rights and political and religious freedom to bear on our practice of our foreign policy. Why? For one thing, because the habits of democracy are the surest guarantees of the peaceful resolution of disputes, respect for the rights of others, and the rule of law. Moreover, these are not only worthwhile objectives in themselves; they are also major elements in the establishment of stable, long-term economic growth.

We have mature relations with the entire APEC region. These relationships are growing deeper and more substantial every year. One measure of this maturity is our ability to speak clearly to each other, and we believe it is in everyone's interest to continue to do so, despite the occasional bumps in the road.

We also have active democratic development projects with many APEC countries but that shouldn't, and hasn't, prevented us from raising human rights issues with them. For example, Prime Minister Harper raised with Vietnamese leaders specific cases of Vietnamese citizens being held in prison for their political or religious beliefs. At the same time, Canadian legal experts are working with their Vietnamese counterparts in strengthening Vietnam's legal system and governance institutions.

It is clearly in Canada's interests to see the spread of democratic values and the institutions of democratic governance. Qualities like compromise, the rule of law, respect for the rights of all are, unfortunately, still very much in short supply in the world's hot spots. Yet they hold the key to resolving so many festering disputes B not only within countries but also between them. The commitment to democratic development is, in a way, an investment in Canada's future security, even if the results may not be felt for years.

Let me conclude.

Canadians deserve a foreign policy that draws on the best traditions of Canadian activism in international affairs. A foreign policy that acts in Canada's interests; a foreign policy that is guided by our long-held values; a foreign policy that seeks, where it can, to ameliorate or, in the case of Afghanistan, to confront, the potential challenges to Canada's security and prosperity before they come to visit us or do us harm.

That may be a tall order. And we cannot be everywhere all the time. But it would not be responsible for a Canadian government not to do its utmost where it can to protect Canada's interests internationally.

This is what principled leadership in foreign policy is all about. And this is, I would submit, the kind of leadership that Canada is getting today from this

government and will continue to get in future.

Thank you.