

His Worship Bob Chiarelli Luncheon Reception in Honour of the Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Friday, September 23, 2005 / 12:00 p.m

Thank you Your Excellency Carlos Miranda, Ambassador of Costa Rica and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to again address so many distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps, and I would like to begin by welcoming you, especially the new arrivals, to Ottawa.

J'aimerais tout d'abord souhaiter la bienvenue à nos invités d'honneur, les représentants distingués du corps diplomatique.

We also welcome an eminent group of distinguished guests including, parliamentarians, municipal and business leaders.

First of all, thank you for this opportunity to meet with you, in what I hope will be a productive and continuing dialogue. Today's event is intended to make each member of our diplomatic community feel welcome in our City. It is our way of saying – quite sincerely – that Ottawa is your 'home-away-from home'.

When I was wondering what to say today, I was reminded of a definition of diplomacy put forth by the late, great Canadian Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson.

No stranger to diplomatic endeavours, the former Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner once said: "Diplomacy is [the art of] letting someone else have your way."...

Seriously though, when I think about the tumultuous political times we live in, I don't think it has ever been so difficult or challenging to be a diplomat. Recent world events underscore this fact.

We are living in a time when diplomats, among others, are more apt to be exposed to dangers. And yet, never has there been a greater need for diplomats...never has the world called out more loudly for agents of peace...for ambassadors of understanding.

Les dernières années ont servi un dur réveil au monde entier. Les événements troublants à l'échelle internationale nous semblent plus près que jamais... les conflits d'ordre géopolitique, dont les répercussions se font ressentir jusqu'ici, sont plus réels que jamais. En ces temps de grands remous, il va sans dire que l'importance de la diplomatie est à son summum.

And so each of you finds yourself here in Canada's diplomatic hub.

What makes Ottawa truly unique is that this is a city – a capital – that was not only founded *on*, but founded *by* diplomacy.

A little bit of history here:

You see, in the 1850's, the capital of the then-Province of Canada had not been decided. It fell to Queen Victoria to choose the capital. And she was faced with strong and passionate lobbies from the residents of Montreal, Kingston, Toronto and Ottawa.

In the end, Queen Victoria made the diplomatic choice and selected Ottawa – largely because it was situated on the geographic boarder between *English* Ontario and *French* Quebec.

A lot has changed in the last 150 years, but at least one constant remains: Ottawa's importance as a meeting place, and place where people have historically come together.

Never has this tradition been more evident than in the last several years. At a time when international conflict has reached a zenith, and international relations are often strained, Ottawa has – since September of 2001 – hosted numerous international conferences. And while these meetings, such as the G-8, have attracted large demonstrations, they have been extremely well managed, especially when compared to similar meetings in other places. (*Chief Vince Bevan*)

Meetings in Ottawa are held against the historical backdrop of a place that has grown from a hunting ground for the Outaouais tribe of Algonquin Indians, to brawling lumber town, to quiet peaceful Capital, to a vibrant exciting City and Canada's hi-tech capital.

And meetings here are set against the natural backdrop of a City that sprawls over 2,760 square kilometres. Ottawa affords a rich quality of life, filled with an abundance of rivers and green spaces. There are few large cities where you can find the services of a modern city married with a dynamic cultural industry, a vibrant political culture and a huge expanse of natural beauty. Ottawa really is an astonishing mix of environmental splendour and cultural vibrancy.

Certainly Ottawa has felt the effects of the worldwide downturn in technology industries...but Ottawa has weathered this economic storm remarkably well. In the shadow of the Peace Tower there have been significant international trade opportunities involving our City's technology companies.

Our hi-tech workforce remains at around 60,000. In the last several years, hundreds of new technology companies have started up, and our economy is one of the strongest in Canada. Last year 6,000 technology jobs were created in Ottawa.

Unemployment is at its lowest level in three years. The economy produced 30,000 new jobs last year. The biggest job growth in nearly five years of above-normal economic growth.

Ottawa based companies are among the global leaders in Life Science, Photonic Software and Telecommunications. (*Heart Institute, Dr. Keon*)

And it helps that companies doing business here are supported by...

- 4 post-secondary education institutions; including the University of Ottawa, the largest bilingual university in North America;
- we have highly educated workforce: Ottawa citizens have the highest rate of post-secondary education in Canada;
- We enjoy substantial funding for research and development; receiving almost 30% of Canada's venture capital, and
- an unshakable spirit of entrepreneurship... that is well supported by this municipal government.

Notwithstanding our economic attributes, Ottawa has other wonderful things to offer visitors – whether career diplomats or casual tourists....

(Bear with me while I do some bragging!)

- We host more than 60 festivals and major events each year including world famous Jazz Festival, Blues Festival, Chamber Music Festival, Winterlude and the annual Tulip Festival.
- We have the National Arts Centre, as well as over 30 museums, including the National Gallery, the Museum of Civilizations and the newly built War Museum. We have Ottawa

Symphony Orchestra, Opera Lira and many theatre and dance groups throughout the City.

- We boast more than 50 golf courses, and over 300 kilometers of recreational trails.
- We have very significant sports and recreational facilities.
- And of course, Ottawa is privileged to be the home of over 130 embassies.
- And we serve up over 1,600 restaurants (*more than any diplomatic expense account could access in a regular posting!*)

With all of this to offer, Ottawa hopes to be a very comfortable 'home-away-from-home' for all of you. (*And perhaps even in the near future home of the Commonwealth Games!*)

We truly appreciate that our diplomatic community deeply cares about Ottawa and its people.

That is evident through the numerous fundraisers in this City, whether it's a fashion show at an Ambassador's residence for charity, the Watercan fundraiser, or Doors Open Ottawa which features some of your Embassies, or the famous annual Viennese Ball.

I also note there are a number of publications in the City focusing on the diplomatic community including the Embassy newsweekly, whose publisher Anne Marie Creskey is with us here today. Ottawa's new reality is reflected in the changing face of our City's population.

- We welcome more than 10,000 immigrants a year in Ottawa.
- Nous accueillons plus de 10 000 immigrants à Ottawa chaque année.
- Immigrants to Ottawa have found a very beautiful, diverse and welcoming City, where they are encouraged to celebrate their own roots. These immigrants have contributed greatly to forming the mosaic that is Ottawa. The landscape of our City is as diverse and remarkable as the people who inhabit it.
- We have a strong community partnership of all faith communities called Interfaith Ottawa.
- I recently attended at an elementary public school in Ottawa where the principal told me the student population is comprised of children who speak 80 different languages.
- And there are now as many cultural organizations as there are languages in this city. These organizations work tirelessly to enrich the lives of the residents of Ottawa.

In terms of our rural economy, Ottawa fosters an agricultural economy that has more farmland than any other city in Canada. Our rural land mass makes up 90% of our landscape, represents almost half a billion dollars in economic activity, and employs 20,000 people.

Our rural areas and vast green spaces within our City limits helps make Ottawa rank very highly on the quality of life scale.

A recent Mercer International Consulting report, which looked at over 200 cities world-wide, placed Ottawa 20th in the world for quality of life and fourth best city for a healthy community.

So there is much to experience here. And just as your presence enriches our city, I hope you will find your time here both personally satisfying and professionally rewarding.

We hope you will see Ottawa not simply as your host City, but as your full partner in promoting economic ties, in fostering cultural exchange and in advancing understanding between your country and Canada.

More than ever before, the diplomatic community needs to feel safe and secure.

You need to work from a base (a 'home base,' as it were) from which solutions can be found... business can be done...and understanding and goodwill can be fostered. We believe our City offers all of this.

Je vous remercie encore une fois de vous être joints à nous aujourd'hui.

So welcome, and thank you for being here.