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Citizenship Speech at The Hague

“Citizenship is the Way a Country
Believes in Itself”

The Hague – Tuesday, December 4, 2007

It's a pleasure for me to be with you today on the occasion of your first Citizenship Lecture here at The Hague and in the Netherlands. To a Canadian from our largest city, Toronto, it pleases me to speak in a city and a country that values cities and thinks of them as forming a distinct character in a nation. Alas, we are far behind you in valuing the very idea of city which shares the same roots as citizens. We in Canada are somewhat clumsily trying to create the character of our cities, now that all the people are there. We need to learn from you the power that cities have, the importance which is not in a descending order – federal, provincial, municipal – but in atomic formation, drawing and gaining energy in every direction and dimension.

And it is this energy which has enabled you to inaugurate, as a city, a lecture on citizenship because you wish to offer leadership in this direction.

I speak to you in a number of guises: I was the Governor-General of Canada for 6 years, I was a refugee during the Second World War, and I became a Canadian citizen when I was 10 years old. And all of these facts colour what I'm going to talk to you about today.

My parents are Chinese. My grandfather was an immigrant to Australia from his poverty-stricken area of China called the Pearl River Delta, from which most of the Chinese diaspora has come over the last one hundred-and-fifty years. It was an area over-populated and economically deprived. And the people from this area knew for generations that their only hope for survival was for the men to go overseas and work as coolies – digging trenches in the First World War battlefields in Europe, carrying dynamite for the building of the Canadian National Railway, doing laundry and working as house servants. My grandfather went to Australia because of the gold rush. However, with his luck, the rush was already over when he got there and he settled for working as a day labourer, eventually running a tiny grocery store in a village of sixty-three people in New South Wales.

My father was born in that village in Australia at the beginning of the 20th century. When he was nineteen years old, he decided that he wanted to understand what it was like, as a Chinese, to be part of a larger context, and so he went back to China to his ancestral village. What he saw in 1926 was not particularly edifying – war lords, poverty, filth, lack of hygiene. After six months, he left for the British colony of Hong Kong. There he met my mother and eventually they began their life together.

In the middle of the 19th century, my mother's family had gone to what was then Dutch Guyana, and what now is Surinam. Perhaps through that country I maybe related to some of you in this room! Her whole family spoke English, Dutch and two Chinese dialects. They owned cocoa and coffee plantations. After three generations, her family returned to Hong Kong with their money and settled in to a life which was dependent upon the British. In the words of the colonialists at the time, they were a comprador family – that is, their sole reason for being in Hong Kong was as middle-men for the British.

I give this family history only to say that it is not as though everything in my background had been completely settled before I came to Canada. I was, and am, a child of Diaspora – I am someone that didn't belong anywhere and I remain someone who understands the everlasting anguish of that.

The surrender of Hong Kong to the Japanese at the end of 1941 meant that we were living under occupation. With the combination of incredible cunning on my father's part and very good luck, we were part of a Red Cross exchange that brought us to Canada on the Swedish Red Cross ship, The Gripsholm. Eventually, we made our way to Ottawa, where, with one suitcase apiece, we began our lives at the beginning of winter in 1942.

My father got a job as a clerk in our Federal government. Language was not a problem for my parents, as Hong Kong was a British colony and my mother had gone to English school there. As for my English-speaking father, he had never learned Chinese, growing up as he did in the Australian countryside.

There was certainly no formal structure to integrate us into Canadian society. There were none of the hosts of associations that we have known to welcome immigrants, refugees, help women learn English, and so on. The Ottawa we came to was a small white place, with rather large white people. There were several Chinese laundries and a couple of Chinese restaurants.

There was no official status for us as refugees, because it was so unlikely at that time that anyone would ever find their way to Canada as a refugee. Canada's borders were not open, especially not to Orientals. And although immigration is our history, it had come up until then in waves, usually from countries of Europe and northern Europe. Refugees from China and Hong Kong were rare, if non-existent. And there was no Refugee Board to colour us as refugees: we just knew we were, because we only had one suitcase apiece. We had been catapulted out of our background, our class and our privileged and exotic life.

We were very fortunate that a number of people took interest in us. My father's work colleagues were the beginnings of a social circle; the Anglican Church of which we were members and had been for several generations – the history of the British Empire – was very helpful. We were befriended by the local pharmacist, who was Jewish and whose two children walked my brother and me to school. French-Canadian neighbours helped my mother learn to cook because she had always had servants in Hong Kong. And learn she did – and very well, I might add.

Helping neighbours was an instinctive kind of Canadian action. There, I think, lies part of the answer as to how we have been able to produce the kind of society in which we live to day. Basically, there is trust and curiosity among our citizens, and there's the beginning of a human connection.

There has always been the sense that we can help other people. The history of our country, part of which is intertwined with yours here in the Netherlands, is that when called upon to defend the people in Europe or in Asia – so far away from there, so unknown to them – Canadians have rushed to volunteer to take up arms, go overseas, and fight on behalf of people whom they've never known and from whom they ask nothing. Our armies have been entirely volunteer except for a very brief period towards the end of the First World War and part of the Second World War. At the end of the Second World War, we had the third largest army in the world. I am Colonel-in-Chief of the great regiment in Canada called the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, which in the ten days after the First World War was declared, raised 1600 men who arrived in Ottawa from all over Canada by train in order to enlist. They came from factories, from farms, from the woods: the majority was illiterate. Within a number of

weeks after very preliminary training, they were off to Britain to continue training, and then to go straight into the trenches at the beginning of 1915.

When I came here in 2005 for the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Holland by our Canadians, I realized that our veterans who came and come continually whenever there is a large celebration and sometimes in-between, like to come here because they like to remember that they did something good for people, that they did it out of a spirit of knowing what it is to help, what it is to rescue, what it is to give.

The year before in 2004 I had walked with veterans who like my father-in-law had landed on the first day of the invasion of Normandy and spoke with them as they wept and remembered the death of their comrades. Not a single one of them ever indicated or thought that these deaths had been in vain. They thought they had been necessary; they suffered because of the loss of friendship and of young life. But none of them ever said they thought it was not worthwhile. And yet what did they know of the French? What did they know of the Dutch? I do believe that nobility of feeling of the volunteer who comes to the rescue of people who are in distress is something that has coloured our national psyche to an extent which makes it possible for us to accept people from all over the world. It certainly is a very big part of the way we are able to behave now, instinctively.

And then I think of the countries here in Europe, who, unlike us, have known invasion, aggression and most terrifying of all, occupation. Is there a psychic remnant that worries about invasion and loss, not only of land but of selfhood? Perhaps this is a worthwhile question to explore. Is there a sense that somehow if others come and they are not like you, they will be taking something away from you? These are questions that go beyond statistics, beyond economics. But I think they might be examined in a way that could be worthwhile and could be healthy for the psyche of nations struggling with immigration. In some deep unconscious way, are immigrants being perceived initially as invaders? Are they seen as people who will take away from what has been here? Will they be seen as wanting to eradicate and replace?

We have learned to understand about difference, to live with diversity, to respect difference and to always be mindful of the vulnerable. Perhaps this is because we were a pioneer society of loss and hardship – poor people coming to a poor country. What did we have to lose?

When I look back to my childhood I don't remember immigrants coming until about 1947, when millions of displaced persons arrived from Europe and were welcomed to Canada. The Dutch arrived too, industrious, thrifty and to my disappointment, as a child, not wearing wooden shoes. Then in the 1950s we took 60,000 Hungarians after the Uprising in 1956. Two decades later in the 1970s, when the Vietnamese boatpeople were adrift on the high seas and needed refuge, our government agreed to take a certain number – 25,000. But Canadian public opinion strongly disagreed. Seeing the suffering of these people, seeing the children, knowing the background and aftermath of the war in Vietnam, they felt that number was not enough. Synagogues, churches, volunteer groups, families – together they offered to sponsor twice as many as that number and to take responsibility for them so eventually 75,000 boatpeople came to Canada in that period.

Today, three-quarters of Canadians believe that immigrants have a positive influence. We compare this to 54% in Australia, 52% in the United States, and we have found that acceptance of immigrants rises as the immigration increases. In 2007, we accepted 7,700 per 1 million of our population. Thirty years ago, in 1977 we accepted 5,000 per one million, and at that time two-thirds of the people surveyed thought that was rather high. But I suppose why we are unique is that we have made diversity part of our sense of identity. Our identity is diversity. In 2003, 85% of Canadians said multiculturalism is important to Canadian identity. In fact, they said that it was more central to our identity than either bilingualism or, imagine this, hockey.

Our experience in Canada shows that diversity really works best when there are more than two groups. It reminds me of what Voltaire said when he went in exile to England. He noted that there were a number of expressions of religious feelings – sects, varieties of worship. He had come from a very Catholic France and he said that he supposed that it was best to have many beliefs and religions so that none could be tyrannical.

Recognition of the role of immigration in the building of a democratic and egalitarian society can be traced right back to 1848 in Canada when our country became a country with Responsible Parliamentary Government. This was almost two decades before Canada's total Confederation. It was the time when people were granted the right to vote if they had property. What that also meant, incidentally, was that many women in Canada were voting decades before they were enfranchised in other parts of the world. That was because they became property owners through the death of their husbands or their fathers. It was also a time when you did not have to be literate to vote, because you got up "on the hustings" – a kind of platform - when your name was called and declared out loud for whom you were voting. And, this made it possible for illiterate people, by virtue of being property owners, to state their preference for their government.

The foundation being francophone and anglophone, the religions being Catholic and Protestant, we had a complex situation resting on a foundation of Aboriginal peoples who had been on the land when all the Europeans arrived, the people who were the original inhabitants.

The attitude towards the diversity that was already apparent in Canada is captured in the beautiful eloquent words of Louis LaFontaine, the great co-founder with Robert Baldwin of the union that would eventually lead to our Confederation. In addressing his Electors at Terrebonne in 1848, he said:

“Le Canada est la terre de nos ancêtres; il est notre patrie, de même qu’il doit être la patrie adoptive des différentes populations qui viennent, des diverses parties du globe, exploiter ses vastes forêts dans la vue de s’y établir et d’y fixer permanemment leurs demeures et leurs intérêts. Comme nous, elles doivent désirer, avant toute chose, le bonheur et la prospérité du Canada. C’est l’héritage qu’elles doivent s’efforcer de transmettre à leurs descendants sur cette terre jeune et hospitalière. Leurs enfants devront être, comme nous, et avant tout, Canadiens.»

In English it reads as movingly as it does in French:

“Canada is the land of our ancestors. It is our country as it must be the adopted country of the different peoples which come from around the globe, to make their

way into its vast forests to build their homes and place their hopes. Like us, their paramount desire must be the happiness and prosperity of Canada. This is the heritage which they should endeavour to transmit to their descendants in this young and hospitable country. Above all, their children must be like us, Canadians.”

Conscious egalitarianism is one of the reasons why citizenship has always been encouraged for our immigrants. With a few unfortunate exceptions we have always wanted our immigrants to become citizens and to have a stake in the country – whether in the land given to them by the government, or in something more abstract such as the concept of freedom and the ability to learn and to change ourselves. The concept of migrant workers is alien to us – the exception being fruit pickers from the Caribbean and Mexico who come on limited contracts for our short summer harvests.

As a country we have largely escaped genocide and civil conflict. In 170 years of our history since we became a country, approximately 80 people have been killed in civil strife. And of that number, 75 were killed on one day during a rebellion in the West in the 1880s.

Perhaps it's not that important that citizens don't kill each other, however for Canadians it is a critical sub-text in the understanding of our society and values. You know that we are great warriors when we are called upon. And we are very good peacekeepers. But we just have never been very good at killing each other. Yet we are a country with two official major world languages, French and English, and two dominant Western religions, Protestantism and Catholicism. For nearly 200 years, we have given equal rights to both language groups and religions. At a time when Roman Catholics were not allowed to hold office in Great Britain, it is worth observing that ours not only had the vote, we also had a Catholic Prime Minister, Louis LaFontaine.

One of our finest philosophers, Charles Taylor, says: “A prolonged refusal of recognition between groups in a society can erode the common understanding of equal participation on which a functioning liberal democracy crucially depends.” We have depended upon a knowledge of complexity to become the kind of country we are. In a pluralistic society such as ours, people want to be recognized for what they are, not for what other people see them to be, often mistakenly. This is crucial to an individual's, as well to a nation's, sense of identity.

And that is why citizenship is so central to our immigration policy. When we bring people to Canada as immigrants, we choose them as future citizens. And, legally speaking, they can become a Canadian citizen in 3-5 years of arriving in Canada if they follow the prescribed procedures.

Our attitude that all immigrants will be citizens makes me think that Aristotle said in *Physica*: “With respect to what is eternal, there is no difference between being possible and being.” I guess we are Aristotelians by seeing immigrants as possible citizens, we are already recognizing them as citizens in the making. We believe that they will become citizens. As citizens they will take on all the same responsibilities as other citizens – obeying our laws, paying taxes, etc. I always tell new citizens that citizenship is a fixed menu, not a self-serve buffet where you can pick and choose. Once you are adopted in the family of your fellow citizens, you accept the good with the bad and never can you say that you don't accept something because it happened before you got here. Canada, the

land of our ancestors as we say in our national anthem, gives us ancestors and we are adopted by them. In other words, we expect the newcomer to buy into a society in a way that is useful to the society but also helpful to them as people. And they can do this only if they are citizens and not kept in some kind of migrant limbo

Full citizenship begets full participation in society. As a result of this attitude towards citizenship Canada has the highest proportion of foreign-born legislators in the world. And the world's largest proportion of seats in legislature (our House of Commons) occupied by people who were not born in Canada. In Canada 19.3% of people were born outside, and in 2007 13% of the MPs were born outside. It's also important to remember that Members of Parliament who are Chinese, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu have been elected in very diverse ridings, but not in ridings that are predominantly of their backgrounds. In other words, a diverse riding can see it as an advantage to have somebody who is from another minority group represent them at the highest level in the land.

One of our greatest thinkers, Northrop Frye, whose student I was very lucky to be in graduate school at the University of Toronto, said "we participate in society by means of our imagination or the quality of our social visions. Our vision of what our society is, what it could be and what it should be are all structures of metaphor because the metaphor is the unit of all imagination. Logical thinking in this field seldom does more than rationalize these metaphorical visions". So we participate. And we see that, by having other people participate, they have made us a better country. The highest civilian order and honour that we have in Canada – the Order of Canada, of which I was the Principal Companion and the Chancellor while I was Governor-General – has as its motto "They desire a better country." That's very Canadian because it implies that we are always striving for something more; that we know that we are not finished; that we know we are not the best.

But such as we are, we are a country that welcomes the world. Our predominant numbers of citizens now come from non-white sources – Somalia, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. We have made this adaptation basically within the last 25 years. Up until now it has gone extremely well. As Governor-General, I was very proud to preside over Citizenship Ceremonies, which I will tell you about later, but the last one I did in Calgary two years ago there were 51 new citizens, and that day they came from Algeria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, England, Fiji, Grenada, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea, Lebanon, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Russia, St. Kitt's and Nevis, Scotland, Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States, Venezuela and Vietnam – 37 different countries.

I can assure you that this does not cause fear – certainly not that kind of nameless fear which is the most dangerous fear for anyone. When I used to go into the schools very often, which I enjoyed a great deal, and talked to children and adolescents, I would see the headscarves among some of the Muslim girls; I saw turbans on some of the Sikhs. These differences are so much easier to understand when we know that because these youngsters are growing up as citizens, they will understand what Canada is, understand what our history has been and what they will contribute as their share to our history of our future. I talked with a young girl, aged 11, in Saint John, New Brunswick, who was wearing a headscarf but her older sister, at 14, was not. And I asked her why. She

shrugged and she said “I want to be different and my sister doesn’t.” It seemed to be as simple as that.

Most importantly, everyone is going to a public school. If we’re going to be able to continue to accommodate newcomers into society we have to have well-funded public education. That is, education paid for by the State, free for all citizens. It has always been the key to our success ever since our humble beginnings. Without public education we cannot have a cohesive society, a society with shared values. Without public education we cannot continue to have the public good fulfilled, that is the internationalization and the continuation of our key notions and values from one generation to the next. We can only do all of this in a democratic structure where all children are treated as equal, and that is what public education does. We speak of people who will take their place in society, but it means that we must make sure there are no barriers for people who come to be included. That too is what public education does, and it is up to our society to welcome them. And that we can only do through public institutions.

Another one is our public libraries – free libraries - which have always been a source of enormous education for people. During the Depression in the Prairies, when men had no jobs they would flock to the public libraries in Regina and Saskatoon in order to read. Those libraries, which were funded by the American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, thousands of them, beautiful buildings usually built like small Greek temples, were the foundation for many immigrants’ lives, including mine. I was an avid library user and all that knowledge was mine when I was young. It gave me a world apart from school, and apart from my family.

Librarians in Canada have known this: the Chief Librarian of Toronto started adding books to the central library of Toronto 90 years ago in Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish.

I have noticed that young people find libraries a great meeting place – the large tables, the piles of books, the excuses to get up and look at different shelves all encourage fraternization. So, too, do our co-educational schools. Inter-marriage is inevitable when our young people go to school together; they learn the same things, they go to the same dances, they cheer for the same sports teams. In the latest census, 6% of people between 24 and 35 are inter-marrying. That’s five times the rate of a generation ago. And, it is accelerating.

Education is so important in any discussion of citizenship because our immigration policy has always placed an emphasis on skilled workers and on people who have language skills so that they may be part of the economy which we have in Canada, which is now more service- and information-oriented. Second-generation immigrant men earn \$49,000 a year as compared to \$42,000 a year for men who have been here for two or three generations. With women, second-generation immigrant women earn \$32,000 as opposed to \$27,000 for those who have been here for two or three generations. New citizens have a drive to succeed, to make up for any loss they perceive they sustained from leaving their country of origin.

When 84% of new Canadians say that the quality of life is better in our country, they are referring to our schools, our libraries, to our urban and wilderness parks, and to our health-care system. Since we started opening our immigration doors 40 years ago in this

remarkable way, we have developed our own Canadian culture dynamically. I can certainly tell you that it did not exist when I was young. But I have been very fortunate to have grown up in a parallel path to everything that has created our cultural identity. Being in the same graduating class at university with Margaret Atwood; meeting Michael Ondaatje when we were twenty; reading the first volume of Rohinton Mistry's brilliant short stories, when he was still working as a bank clerk in Brampton, a suburb of Toronto; the wonderful films of Atom Egoyan and Denys Arcand; the refreshing arrival of Glenn Gould, who was not only one of the greatest pianists of the twentieth-century, but a profound Canadian who loved our Northernness, our climate, the challenges it gave us, the character it developed in us. His series of radio programs – the Idea of the North – marked many of us in our early years and created a longing for us to know The North better. Perhaps one of our greatest writers, Margaret Laurence, who has not had the renown abroad that she should have, said just before she died "If I could ask one thing of all of you [her fellow Canadians] it would be to feel in your heart's core the reality of others".

I think that's what we should always be trying to do in Canada and what we are implicitly saying we are doing. When people come to Canada and have the chance to learn the civic political principles upon which our values are founded, and are expected to take their place within our society – it is important that, when they arrive, they should never be afraid of becoming marginalized or becoming victims of prejudice, bigotry, or being prevented from pursuing their own lives and making their own choices. They should know that their reality is felt by all of us.

So you are a Sikh, you are a young Sikh teenager, and you want to be in our Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in their beautiful red serge jackets and the possibility of participating in the great Musical Ride which they take all over the world. Can you wear a turban? The answer is "yes", so we do have RCMP officers who wear turbans. This does not make them any less Royal Canadian Mounted Police than it makes them less as human beings. In the matter of the headscarf, the hijab, which I touched on a little earlier, 42% of Muslim women wear the hijab for all sorts of reasons, including the ones I told you about for the little girl. Some see it as a mark of dominant feminism, some wish to be recognized as Muslim immediately, and some see it as a sign of independence. I really have no patience with people who say that women wearing headscarves is a sign that they are showing their subservience to men and that men are forcing them to wear a headscarf. I am not willing to listen to people who fret about Muslims not having gender equality. What about gender equality among non-muslims. Let us always work for gender equality where we live and where we know the customs. I have seen little boys in turbans and little girls in hijabs signing Silent Night at a Christmas concert at Adrienne Clarkson Public School in a suburb of Ottawa. I find this perfectly natural, as I do the fact that a Buddhist Thai woman is their choir conductor. This is Canada.

We are a liberal society, and only with the protection and recognition of the individual can we build a multicultural society of the decency, toleration and kindness – a society as individuals of different backgrounds – while respecting their right to belong, if they wish, to ethnic cultural groups within that society.

Of course, some immigrants may want to seek shelter, customs, food and so on in their respective groups, but they should not feel that they are forced to be in those groups. Our society can help them learn the language, learn how to dress for winter, learn how to live a life where you have freedom of choice, speech, politics. They must feel free to

make the choice. And I'm convinced that ethnic groups only become ghettos if they feel rejected by the mainstream society. Then they feel they have no choice and they huddle together. All of us who have come from somewhere else totally different to take our place in Canada have always wanted to be included. Inclusion is the important thing in a society like ours built on new citizens.

The Koran says that mankind is "a single soul made by a single Creator". And in Darwinian terms, every human being on this Earth is exactly at the same stage of evolution. As a human race, we share genes and we are equal. We need to know this and we need to make it work for us. A country like Canada has come out of overtly racist attitudes, not only in its treatment of the Chinese but its internment of Canadian-born Japanese during the Second World War, which involved the confiscation of their property and businesses and the refusal of all of their human rights. It is a remarkable thing that we can still regard our relationship with the Aboriginal people with hope, considering that we did not live up to our side of the treaties which they signed in order to cede their land to our settlement. They were here first and they welcomed the Europeans and showed them the way to the wealth they made from beaver pelts. And the first 200 years of our relationship were excellent. Only in the last 150 years did things turn sour.

Nevertheless we should all listen to Chief John Kelly, an Ojibwa, who said 30 years ago: "As the years go by the Circle get bigger and bigger. Canadians of all colours and religions are entering the Circle. You might feel that you have roots somewhere else, but in reality you are right here with us." This metaphor of inclusion is becoming part of our psyche.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, our first great francophone Prime Minister, said in a speech on the occasion of the Province of Alberta's entering Confederation in 1905 to become part of Canada: "Those who come at the eleventh hour will receive as fair treatment as those who have been here a long time...We do not anticipate and we do not want, that any individual should forget the land of their origin or their ancestors. Let them look to the past, but let them also look to the future: let them look to the land of their ancestors, but let them also look to the land of their children. Let them become Canadians."

When new citizens take their Oath to Canada, it is very often with tears in their eyes. A Somali said to me at my last Citizenship Ceremony, "You know, it's not that we are trading one country for another. We never had a country. And now we have one." That is what is important about Canada. That it wants to take the dispossessed, the homeless, those seeking a better life in every dimension and give them a place. Give them a country, give them something – which is full acceptance of their worth as an individual human being, not as a "they" or "them".

My life since the end of my period as Governor General has been much taken up with my Foundation, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, which wants to help new Canadians be put into the mainstream of Canadian life as quickly as possible. One of the aspects of our activities is to create more and more community Citizenship Ceremonies. I know you are doing ceremonies here now and I think it will do a lot of good – ritual is important on occasions like changing your nationality. For many years we've had ceremonies held in government offices all across the country – 2900 of them every year to be exact, in order to make roughly 260,000 Canadian citizens a year. Our aim is to have communities, large and small, welcome new Canadians, give them human contact

right at that point where they can talk and have tea, coffee and cookies with well-established Canadians and talk to them in a roundtable situation. Some of these well-established Canadians possess the highest orders of the land, possess the Order of Canada, some of them awarded for Bravery, others from the community. We have no trouble finding people to come to these ceremonies as we have 6 million volunteers in Canada at any given time. Roughly 20% of our population is driving around delivering meals to old people, picking up people with no transport to bring them to medical appointments, doing tax returns for people in retirement homes who have no family or access to an accountant – we have an award for these volunteer people but that spirit is in all of us. A number of our high schools across the country now give a credit in school for doing volunteer work.

The other things we do with our Institute to help citizenship is to make it possible for people coming to Canada to understand what it is that has made us Canadians. We are working out a system, as you are, of giving them free vouchers and tickets to museums, concert halls, operas, art shows. I want new citizens to feel at ease in the culture we have created, and to have access to everything that I have access to. I want them to feel they understand what we are creating in the arts.

I also want to emphasize the relationship to nature, which Canadians grow up with naturally and which perhaps is the most foreign to many of our new citizens. Our relationship with the wilderness is very special in Canada and it is what I hope will make us leaders in all ecological and environmental matters. We have institutions like the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Canadian Wildlife Federation and a host of others which are dedicated to keeping our wilderness in as good a condition as possible. You might think that is a very weird thing to be thinking about, considering we have the second largest country in the world, but that probably makes us more aware of the fragility of our eco-system and the importance of our North and the degradation that might come from the melting of the Polar Ice Cap. I want young new Canadians to participate in learning how to canoe and kayak, and pitch a tent and sleep in the wilderness and learn how to cook their own food over a fire, and go on long canoe trips for 10 days to two weeks carrying everything they need with them on their backs in groups - learning to swim a number of different strokes and also learning how to fish responsibly. All of these things are a part of what Nature has given us in Canada. I'm sorry but I do always say to any European audience that in Europe you have countryside, green and pastoral, but in Canada we have Nature often raw and frightening. Our relationship to the natural is what makes us fully Canadian. I want anyone from Iran, Iraq or Pakistan to have just as much access to it as I have always had since I was a child. One of our poets says that in the Canadian imagination "we have a vision of nature beyond the human ego".

This is the great opportunity which Canadians have and which we will always have. I think we have developed a feeling for the "Other" and I think that comes from the latitude where we live, where we are more linked to the North than to the South because our climate – the Northern climate – has created a character for Canadians which is both sturdy and compassionate. A character that comes from understanding that you too might be standing outside freezing at -40 degrees, have to knock on someone's door – and that they would take you in.

I hope that you can take something useful out of our experience that fits into your own history and your own narrative as countries. Every country tells its own story. We have seen the unfortunate events that have happened with immigrants here, in France and in

Germany, and it surprises us. We very much admire all Europeans, almost stereotypically. We admire them for their culture, their long history, for the beauty of their cities, the resilience of their population. So we could never imagine that we could be doing better than you do. Among young people 80% believe that “other cultures have a lot to teach us. Contact with them is enriching for us.” For us, I think, the grain of the foreign in our oyster-like mass becomes the pearl, otherwise we know that it could be another suppurating wound. Somehow, our organism has been created to make the pearl and that’s what we’ve done.

Recently there was a poll done among Muslim citizens (we have roughly 900,000), asking them a number of questions about living in Canada. Ninety-nine percent of them said they were proud to be Canadian. And 91% said that Canada is on the right track as a country. It’s interesting to compare that only 71% of non-Muslim Canadians thought that Canada was on the right track. Something you might find interesting as well is that 77% of them said that Muslims are better treated in Canada than in other countries. You do have to look at the way our immigration policy has operated, the way we choose future citizens, because it is a fact that 45% of our Muslim population has a university degree, compared to 23% of other Canadians.

Nor do established Canadians feel that newcomers are taking their jobs. There simply isn’t that feeling. My worry is that new citizens, in the first critical ten years, are not able to quickly mount the economic ladder as they have been able to do in the past, and I worry about that gap of earnings increasing, that gap that exists between our new citizens and native-born Canadians. I don’t feel that we have the time to wait for a generation. Interestingly enough, when Canadians are asked about false-refugee claimants, the majority state that they see the system as the problem and not the people. Just as 75% believe that immigrants have a positive effect on the economy, it is commonplace to hear people talk about how hard immigrants work. And this is always said in a matter-of-fact admiring way.

I hope very much that the society that I grew up in, even with its institutionalized remains of colonial ideas, will continue to have what it seems to have always had, which is the appropriate feeling of forgiveness – which does not mean forgetting – and that it never becomes a punishing society, which is only about retribution. For if a society does not forgive, it cannot accept. And acceptance will help us in our dealings not only in our own country but also in the way we regard others and the way others regard us in the world. The tribal tom-toms of the blood do not beat a rhythm heeded by many people in Canada.

We do not want to measure ourselves just as Canadians or as Canadians acting in the world. That’s only one measure of our being as humans. We must maintain a decent sense of “what is right, what is just, what is for the public good”, as one of our greatest statesmen, Joseph Howe, said.

Most Canadians, if you ask them, would never say that they are unique. It is just not the Canadian way. They would say that they feel they are human, decent, that they listen to other people and that basically makes them good multi-lateralists. We are not just a happy little people, hewing wood and drawing water and selling wood, copper and oil. We are an enormously sophisticated society, which has lived through a complex evolution of values and has withstood the buffeting of world movements. And we have always participated in what is morally justified in terms of entering conflict.

I once saw a 1913 photograph of a group of Scandinavian immigrants – I think they were Icelandic – in Larchmont, Ontario in their mittens, overcoats, scarves, toques, every possible layer of wool, huddled around a blackboard on which is written Duties of the Citizen:

1. Understand our government.
2. Take an active part in politics.
3. Assist all good causes.
4. Lessen intemperance (i.e. don't drink too much!).
5. Work for others.

I believe that most new citizens want to follow those precepts. I believe that they believe that if they follow these precepts they will be participating fully in our society and I believe that that kind of citizenship and participation is the only way in which a country can continue to grow – in its understanding of itself and its understanding the world.

Thank you.