

**Address by the Speaker to his Excellency Hamid Karzai,
President of Afghanistan,
after his speech in the House of Commons.
September 22, 2006**

Mr. Speaker, Your Excellency President Karzai, Mr. Prime Minister, Honourable Senators and members of the House of Commons, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of all the parliamentarians and everyone here today, it is my honour, Your Excellency, to thank you for your visit and for your clear and eloquent speech to this joint session of Canada's Parliament.

President Karzai, your acknowledgment of the contribution of Canadian men and women to the development of a modern, free and democratic Afghanistan is greatly appreciated. I am confident that our brave Canadian Forces personnel, together with the humanitarian workers presently deployed in your country are pleased that you have had this opportunity to salute, in the Parliament of Canada, their important work.

We are proud of those Canadians who work alongside the Afghan people, together with participants from 37 countries in the NATO and United Nations, to assist the men and women of Afghanistan in building all elements of your civil and national society.

Today, your country is emerging from its dark era of terror and fear. You have adopted a constitution establishing a democratic Islamic government. You have held democratic elections, re-opened the schools and begun to breathe again after years of war and tyranny. Canada is proud to have been able to help you attain these objectives.

Mr. President, Canada is proud to have assisted the men and women of Afghanistan in accomplishing the goals achieved to date. Together, we have restored hope. Indeed, hope restored, Spem Reduxit, is the very motto of my province of New Brunswick. "Hope Restored" might very well serve as the beacon, as we continue to collaborate with the people of Afghanistan. Our NATO and United Nations colleagues are fully aware that the process of rebuilding Afghanistan has only just begun. We know that the road ahead will be difficult, and we are all too aware of the costs involved.

That is why we are grateful to you, Your Excellency, for addressing the participants of this joint session of Canada's Parliament.

While Canada has a long history of establishing and maintaining peace all around the world, our mission in Afghanistan presents special challenges for the diplomats, police officers, soldiers and development officers.

We are pleased to hear you talk of their contributions and the work that remains to be done.

The past five years since 9/11 may be only a short time in the order of history, however in that short space of time, Canada and Afghanistan have developed new and lasting ties. Canadians have become aware of Your Excellency's historic country as never before, and they hope that, through their efforts and sacrifices, Afghanistan will become a safer place, and the world along with it.

We look forward with hope to the day when all peoples will live in the fullness of freedom, a day when we will be able to give priority to mutually celebrating the music, the art and the literature of each other's cultures.

President Karzai, Your Excellency, your address to this joint session of the two houses of the Parliament of Canada has reassured us that our contributions are bearing fruit. Allow me, therefore, on behalf of all here present, to thank you once again for your address, and to wish you and the people of Afghanistan, Godspeed.