

**Notes for the toast given by H.E. the President of the Republic, Michelle Bachelet Jeria, at the dinner offered in honour of the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper**  
La Moneda Presidential Palace, July 17, 2007

Mr. Prime Minister:

Situated at the far ends of a continent stretching from close to the North Pole to the southern seas, as Canadians and Chileans we find ourselves gathered around a common project. The geographical extremes unite us, therefore, in a shared vision toward the great challenges of this age.

From this happy coincidence, Mr. Prime Minister, I welcome you to Chile. We greet you here at the *Palacio de la Moneda*, the house of Chilean presidents, men and women; a palace that synthesizes, in its austere lines, our very best civic and republican traditions.

Your visit to Chile is, undoubtedly, a gesture of true friendship. As I said this morning, Canada is a country of friends.

But this time the visit goes even further. We, Canada and Chile, wish to take a solid step forward in the bilateral relation.

From what foundation do we take this qualitative step?

First, it will be based on values we share and put into practice. Democracy and respect for human rights, freedom and solidarity, justice and equality provide us with a framework in which to include both our dreams as well as our decisions.

Decisions such as Canada's actions regarding the Chilean exile: thousands of my countrymen and women were welcomed by your country in very difficult years for us, and the majority of them continue to contribute their work and creativity to the society that took them in. Those Chilean-Canadian families are a testament to the deep ties that unite our two countries.

Second, we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Free Trade Agreement between our countries, the first signed by Chile and a member nation of the G-

8. This agreement has provided a permanent opportunity to learn, develop and increase exchanges on all levels.

Through this Agreement we have gained trust and mutual knowledge. I would like to underscore that not once, in these ten years, have we needed to call upon the dispute resolution clause, palpable proof of the good understanding that exists between the public and private sectors of the two countries.

This community of principles and excellent bilateral experience has transformed us into like-minded countries, allowing us not only to act jointly on international issues, but also to propel our relationship toward a new phase.

For that is what we are dealing with, Mr. Prime Minister: that Canada and Chile may be partners in trade and politics; that we might work jointly to advance our nations and our region; that we might benefit, in very concrete terms, from what we have built over the past decade.

We can dream, legitimately, of a common future.

We know how important technological innovation is for Canada. We know that your country is a first-class energy power. We know that we have many similar natural resources, in mining, forestry, fishing and fresh water. And we know, as well, that Canada is one of the greatest foreign investors in an ever-increasing array of sectors.

We know, certainly, that we have very fertile ground to explore in culture and education: Canada is, for us, a point of reference with respect to preschool education – one of my government's priorities –, and your country's vast and successful experience, Mr. Prime Minister, in protection of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, will be of great use in the reform and modernization of our own institutions working toward this purpose.

There lie our greatest possibilities for understanding, cooperation and mutual protection. There we can find the areas in which our regional and provincial governments, our ministries, our universities and our business leaders can work. This is where it is essential to build bridges and forge ties on all levels.

Mr. Prime Minister:

During your visit we have reviewed, as well, diverse global issues of mutual interest. We have spoken of the reform of the OAS and the United Nations, of Haiti, of regional integration initiatives. We have also analyzed various formulae for increasing our exchange and the mobility of Canadian and Chilean citizens between our countries.

South America is a complex and diverse region that has reencountered democracy and seeks to join the global world. We believe that from Canada and Chile it is possible to contribute to this regional path toward development through cooperation, integration, the search for agreements and the affirmation of our common values.

We can be partners in the great endeavour of achieving a region that develops and grows in peace, with justice and with equality.

Mr. Prime Minister, your visit has been truly productive and I thank you, once again, for your interest and your willingness to work with us.

It has also been very gratifying for me, as a lover of music, to spend time with you, a musician in your own right. This is nothing strange coming from a country such as Canada, which has enriched contemporary music with diverse voices and styles ranging from Joni Mitchell to Diana Krall and Nelly Furtado, from Paul Anka to Leonard Cohen and Rufus Wainwright.

But undoubtedly, our most significant achievement has been to agree upon the foundation for a greater and longer-term understanding between our countries.

We believe that this is a historic event that will define our relationship for decades to come and shine its light over the entire region. Let us raise our glasses to that.

Thank you very much.