

REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR MARIE GERVAIS-VIDRICAIRE

AT ATLANTIK BRÜCKE FAREWELL DINNER

BERLIN, 24 APRIL 2017

Lieber Friedrich, vielen Dank für diese wunderschöne Gelegenheit, mich zu verabschieden.

Dear members of Atlantik Brücke, dear colleague Ambassadors, dear Friends, chers amis du Canada,

It is difficult to believe that I am coming not only to the end of my assignment here in Berlin but also to the end of my career that spanned over 37 years.

But here I am tonight, along with my husband Marc, saying good-bye at the end of what has been an extraordinary experience for both of us.

I have been honoured and privileged to serve under two Prime Ministers who both have established an excellent personal relationship with Chancellor Merkel and to have been engaged in a series of very successful high level visits both sides of the Atlantik such as, for example President Gauck's visit to Canada in 2014.

The year 2017 has already been marked by important events, whether the beginning of the Trump administration or the first round of the election in France. It will also see the start of the BREXIT negotiations and the election here in Germany. This year is also a year of very difficult challenges for the international community who is confronting terrorism, the war in Syria, the situation in the Ukraine and rising tensions in many regions, just to name a few.

For us, in Canada, it is a very special year as we are celebrating our 150th anniversary as a country. It means that Canada is indeed a young country but we have enjoyed democracy for a long uninterrupted period. This is something that our Embassy will be celebrating throughout the year, notably by special events around Canada Day on July 1st to which you will be cordially invited.

As you know, we have a Prime Minister who carries a very positive message and promotes a very progressive agenda.

Those of you who followed Justin Trudeau's visit in Germany in February will have heard him speak about the importance of diversity, free trade, reduction of inequalities, gender parity and fighting climate change

This is why here tonight I want to seize the opportunity to stress that an organisation such as Atlantik Brücke is very important to ensure that the relationship between Canada and Germany is fully used to strengthen the transatlantic relationship and that we fully capitalize on our common values and interests to bring Europe and North America closer together

In this respect, I want to thank you Friedrich as well as Edelgard Buhlman, your Vice-Chair, and your team for your dedication and efforts in that direction. It has been a privilege for me to be able to count on your cooperation over the last 4 years and I am sure my successor, Stephane Dion, will also highly value your collaboration

Of course, CETA which is about to be implemented (at long last!) will help us to achieve this goal as will the Strategic Partnership Agreement which was also approved in February. But this is a work in progress and we all have to ensure that we seize every opportunity to work together to shape globalization, fight climate change and strengthen international cooperation on a range of other important issues

It is easy sometimes for Europeans to forget Canada as our big neighbour provides ample reasons to focus your attention but we, Canadians, have the biggest (or the second biggest) bilateral trade relationship in the world with the US (we alternate with China) and we have learned a few things about managing this relationship - and we are still learning...

Canadians, like Germans, also realize the importance of diversifying our markets and investments. There is a lot of potential for growth in our economic relationship. So, let's use CETA to achieve our common goals and ensure benefits for our population.

For my part, as Ambassador of Canada to Germany, I have been most pleased to see the many links that connect our people, whether through family ties, business relationships, youth exchanges or cultural activities. I must say that, for example, we have always been proud that our Embassy at Leipziger Platz is the only embassy which is an official partner of the Berlinale Film Festival as we present films from the indigenous cinema category every year.

Culture is, in the end, what really enriches us all as human beings

This is why I would like to end my remarks here tonight with a quote from Leonard Cohen, our great Canadian poet and singer who died last year. He said the following referring to one of his most famous songs:

“This world is full of conflicts and full of things that cannot be reconciled. But there are moments when we can... reconcile and embrace the whole mess, and that's what I mean by 'Hallelujah.' “

Thank you. Vielen Dank.