

CANSEC 2023 Opening Address

CANSEC Speech

May 31st, 2023 08:00, Ottawa

Ladies and Gentlemen, delegates, honoured guests from across Canada and around the world: Welcome to CANSEC 2023. Je vous souhaite la bienvenue.

12 months ago, I opened this show with a message of optimism and gratitude. For all we'd overcome, and all we'd achieved together even when forced to remain apart. This morning, we've gathered once again - industry, government, men and women in uniform, friends, allies ... the backbone of this country's defence. C'est un moment charnière pour notre secteur, pour le Canada et pour l'ordre mondial.

The changes we're seeing around us are dizzying. A climate crisis past its tipping point, and a green technology transition pushed to the limits of human ingenuity in response. A cyber battlefield evolving by the minute, with no borders to contain it and few aspects of our lives that it can't touch. A booming commercial space domain, where billionaires - billionaires - can decide whose service gets denied. And new divisions here on Earth, along old fault lines, that have brought global uncertainty.

Now, my next message will be familiar to anyone who's attended CANSEC before. But it's more urgent now than it's ever been. And it's simply this: In our response to this breakneck pace - to these new front lines - there cannot be just industry, or just government, or just the Armed Forces. There cannot be industrial problems, and political problems, and military problems. There cannot be inside and outside the tent. There must be one community. And it's here in this room.

From a single line of code to a fully interoperable platform. From the individual soldier hunkered down in a Ukrainian village, to the millions of people whose way of life she defends. Out of many companies, nations, technologies, vocations: One community. One purpose. To safeguard not only our own borders and citizens, but the ideals that all sovereign, democratic countries hold sacred.

After 15 months of full-scale conflict half a world away, Russia will be relying on new, dangerous allies: Their names are Fatigue. Numbness. Division.

We are all engaged in a war of attrition. A war fought not just with tanks and bullets, but with AI, satellites and drones. A war that requires us to respond with urgency. Agility. Adaptability. Unity.

So we must answer the call differently. We must acknowledge that what we have done and how we have done it in the past may not work for our present, or for our future. The world has changed, and so must we. Where Canada stands - where we stood - in 2023 will be remembered. Will future generations remember us for being bold? The stakes, ladies and gentlemen, are high.

Industry can rise to the challenge. As it did when war broke out in Europe eight decades ago and C.D. Howe

came knocking on our factory doors. As it did during the pandemic. As it did when President Zelenskyy told the West that he needed ammunition, not a ride. Canada is a nation rich in minerals, in shipbuilding, in training and simulation. We're at the leading edge of AI, Quantum, and space-based innovation. And so much more. Walk through those doors and you will see why we're hands-down the most dynamic sector in this country. Walk through those doors and you will see the interconnectedness of it all.

And that ... that is what I believe CANSEC is about. Connecting. Strengthening those bonds of community. Exchanging ideas. Looking each other in the eye. Reminding ourselves of that broader and shared purpose. This has never been more important.

The time to define our future is now, and the time for silos is over. We must recommit to the defence of this nation. To evolving in lockstep with our allies, and with one another. To putting all our cards on the table. To acting decisively.

To being there, together, on every front.

Thank you.