



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

AUSTRALIA-CANADA ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP FORUM RECEPTION

Wednesday 12th February 2020

His Excellency Mr Mark Glauser, Canadian High Commissioner to Australia

Ms Natasha Smith, Australian High Commissioner to Canada

Ms Jennifer Westacott AO and **Mr Norman Steinberg**, Co-Chairs, Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum

Mr Bob Onyschuk QC, President and CEO, Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum

All our distinguished guests

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders with us this evening.

I am delighted to welcome you all to Government House on the occasion of the seventh Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum (AusCan).

I am sure that you would forgive me if, as the Governor of Victoria, I were a little Victoria-centric in my view of Australia. And, generally, I am! But, with the recent merging of two massive bushfires on either side of the Victoria and New South Wales border, I am mindful that borders are just manmade. We are all Australians, and are very much together in all our pursuits, just as we have been in meeting this challenging time.

I am also mindful that it is in difficult times that we know who we can rely upon. Who is there when help is needed. That Canada so willingly and so quickly sent fire-fighters to help Australia, speaks volumes. We are grateful.

It is that connection - that sense of family - that underpins the discussions being held here this week.

Australia and Canada share a history. We share a common language, in the broadest sense, bound by our respect for democracy, the rule of law, pluralism, multiculturalism and egalitarianism.

We have traded together for more than a century, fought side by side in wars across that time, and have held formal diplomatic links for more than 80 years.

Of course, our relationship is not just historical.

Today, our co-operation extends to so many fields.

We work together in a wide range of trade and investment – both committed to free open trade. We work together on defence and security.

In education alone, (a particular area of interest in this State), we see more than 180 formal agreements between Australian and Canadian universities.

And I know that in my own professional area of the law, when short on precedent here, Canada has always been a preferred common law jurisdiction in which to seek out a wise path forward.

Your gathering here, as leaders from the private, public and non-profit sectors, will deepen the ties in all our shared interests. Certainly, your Program will provoke important reflections on some of the most pressing geopolitical issues that we are facing.

I would like to commend all those involved in the success of the Australia-Canada bilateral relationship.

Thank you to Mr Bob Onyschuk QC, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Australia-Canada Economic Leadership Forum, the Board, the staff and all the volunteers for such a significant contribution to that relationship.

Congratulations to the Forum's Co-Chairs, Ms Jennifer Westacott AO, and Mr Norman Steinberg and the Organising Committee.

Jennifer is of course well known to us as the CEO of the Business Council of Australia. We had the pleasure to meet Norm in Montreal in 2018, and very much enjoyed our discussions then.

We are proud that Melbourne is able to host the Forum for what is now the second time. The Victorian Government and many sponsors have helped to make that possible.

We hope that our visitors will take the opportunity to enjoy all that Melbourne and our wonderful State has to offer. I have no doubt that even the most complex conversations go better with a walk in the gorgeous gardens that surround you, over some of the best coffee in the world, whilst visiting our National Gallery of Victoria, (the world's 16th most visited Gallery anywhere in the world), moving further afield around the State, or perhaps when combined with some of Victoria's great wine or gin.

(Forgive me: the Governor of Victoria default position is where I came to rest in the end!)

But the truth is, in Victoria, as in all our States recently affected by the fires, we can be proud that we have the resources – and the generosity of so many – to fight and recover, alongside the talent and commitment of the many who keep us truly open for business and focused on our precious bilateral relations in the meantime.

That only leaves me to say that we wish you all the best in your important discussions.