It gives me great pleasure and is an honour for me, as governor general of Canada, to speak in a Chamber that is so essential to democratic life in Mexico, especially this year, as we celebrate 65 years of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

I would first like to mention the unshakeable, willing and unparalleled ties of friendship that have developed over the years between our people and our institutions.

It is certainly no secret—and I am proud to say—that Mexico holds a special place in the hearts of Canadians.

Moreover, our commitment to increasing security, improving prosperity and promoting democratic values across the entire hemisphere make Canada and Mexico key partners.

It is vital to the well-being of our respective peoples that we work together to fight the threat of sophisticated, organized crime networks that have spread across the entire continent with their illegal activities.

I am referring especially to the trafficking of people, narcotics and influence, and to the corruption, money laundering and violence that are ravaging our communities.

In order to succeed, we must join efforts and establish joint strategies because, as we all know, the situation is extremely serious.

This willingness to strengthen hemispheric cooperation is, in fact, one of the cornerstones of Canada’s foreign policy and we salute the efforts you are making along these same, promising, lines.

We must be bold and build on the dynamic relationship between Canada and Mexico, and this in a number of important aspects of society.

Not only are we major trading partners, thanks to the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, but we have also implemented innovative mechanisms, such as the Canada-Mexico Partnership, launched in 2004, to promote co-operation and dialogue in such areas as investment, innovation, agribusiness, housing, the environment, human capital development, energy, and labour mobility.
Moreover, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which has been in operation for the past 35 years and allows us to receive temporary workers from Mexico, is seen around the world as a model with a great deal of promise.

This State visit is an opportunity for us to explore new areas for co-operation and partnership in order to diversify our investments and business activities. We can certainly do much better and we must double our efforts and stretch our imaginations.

We also share a commitment to multilateralism and maintain a productive dialogue within several international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the G-20, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

There are so many opportunities for us to build on our existing solidarity at this pivotal moment in our collective history, as we face a major crisis of values, one that we cannot reduce solely to its financial component and that demands that we redefine an ethic of sharing and hemispheric responsibility in this era of globalization.

In addition to these many ties are nearly 400 agreements between universities and several studies centres and programs that promote academic exchange and an improved sharing of knowledge between our two countries.

I would say that the same excitement and exuberance can be found in the cultural ties forged between the creative minds of our two countries and of which our peoples are so fond.

As proof, we need look no further than the programming at the Festival Internacional Cervantino in Guanajuato, one of the largest artistic gatherings in Latin America and one of the largest multidisciplinary festivals in the world, whose 37th edition, which ended last month, featured several Québécois artists.

Our artists share that desire to increase the opportunities for collaboration and to enrich the cultural diversity that distinguishes our histories and lands with their unique contributions.

We are delighted because, like Octavio Paz, we believe that “[a]ll cultures are born out of mingling, meetings and clashes,” and, as he warns us, “[c]onversely, civilizations die from isolation.”

And it is precisely from a desire to highlight the close ties that bind us that my husband, Jean-Daniel Lafond, our delegation and I will be going out to meet with the people and organizations that form the backbone of Mexican society—from entrepreneurs to students, from non-governmental organizations to decision-making bodies, from artists to women’s associations—here in the centre of the country and in Chiapas, in Tuxtla Gutiérrez and San Cristóbal de las Casas.

I like diplomacy on a human scale and our dearest wish, in a reinterpretation of
Carlos Fuentes’ beautiful phrase, is to work together to ensure the continuity of a few ideas over time.

It is therefore in this spirit of solidarity and fellowship that we begin this State visit in Mexico, with an unwavering willingness to remind our respective populations that we are brothers and sisters, in spirit and in heart, and with the hope of creating new opportunities for co-operation.

Thank you very much for offering me this special invitation to address you and I wish long life to the strong, cherished friendship between Canada and Mexico!

And I would like to extend our best wishes for your happiness and prosperity as we approach the bicentenary of the Mexican War of Independence and the centenary of the Mexican Revolution!