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CANADA

ADDRESS

of

Ms. Malala Yousafzai

Recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize

to both Houses of Parliament

in the

House of Commons Chamber

Ottawa

on Wednesday, April 12, 2017

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Ms. Malala Yousafzai was welcomed by the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; the Honourable George Furey, Speaker of the Senate; and the Honourable Geoff Regan, Speaker of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

The Speaker: I invite the Right Hon. Prime Minister to speak.

[English]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Honoured guests, parliamentarians, colleagues, and friends, it is a pleasure to be here today to host one of the newest and possibly bravest citizens of Canada, Malala Yousafzai.

Malala, it is a privilege to welcome you to our House, and now that you are an honorary Canadian, I hope you will consider this your House too. Welcome.

Malala's story is one we know well. It is both exceptional and familiar, out of this world, and sadly, commonplace. Years ago, we heard all about this bold, brave girl from Swat Valley who stood up to the Taliban, a whip-smart, politically engaged 12-year-old who was inspiring other kids to raise their voices and lead by example, a girl whose greatest want in life was to go to school, a girl who refused to be silenced. With hope, we stood in awe of her, and with horror, we watched as cowards tried to take her life. Still, as the world prayed while she recovered, we were reminded that a bullet is no match for an idea, that in the face of evil, what is right and what is good will always prevail.

[Translation]

Malala, when you said that you harbour no ill will against your would-be assassin, you manifested a profound goodness that Canadians can identify with.

Just a few months ago, a Quebec City mosque was the target of a terrorist attack. That senseless act of violence left six innocent people dead. They were husbands, fathers, sons. Even in the wake of that crime, Canadians stood united. We did not turn against one another. Neighbours did not turn their backs on each other. We did not succumb to hatred or fear.

By taking positive action, as we always try to do in Canada, we told the rest of the world that we would not answer violence with violence, that we would instead answer fear and hatred with love and compassion.

Malala, you are a paragon of goodness in your words and your actions, which have struck a chord with Canadians and with people around the world.

[English]

Yours is a story of an ordinary girl doing extraordinary things, an everyday hero, a trailblazer and a teenager, a renegade and a reader, a fearless advocate and a girl who wants nothing more than to see more kids in classrooms. On top of that, you are impossibly humble. We Canadians are all about that.

When you accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, you said, "I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not." When you spoke at the UN, you said, "I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard."

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the true embodiment of leadership and service. We should all wish to serve so honourably in our own lifetimes.

Malala, you have given light to boys and girls mired in darkness, and you have challenged women and men of all backgrounds to be better so that we may do better. One area where we must all do better is in educating our young people. We know that only through education can we achieve true peace. I say that not only as a husband, father, and community member. I, first and foremost, say that as a teacher.

I was lucky enough to teach some really great kids in B.C. for five years, and they taught me that going to school is about more than just learning how to read and write. It is about challenging your world view, it is about innovation, and it is about solving problems by working together. Education has the power to change the world. It can end poverty, fight climate change, and prevent wars, but in order to achieve progress, we all have to make sure that all children, girls as well as boys, get to go to school.

I could not imagine a world where my sons, Xavier and Hadrien, could enjoy the gift of learning but my daughter, Ella-Grace, could not. She, like so many other little girls, loves to learn, and she would be devastated if she had that right taken from her.

[Translation]

It is no secret that women and girls have always had to fight, and they still have to fight, to obtain many things that men take for granted: the right to vote, the right to serve their country, the right to pay equity, and the right to decide when to start a family. Sadly, it would take me all day to give an exhaustive list.

However, the success of any society depends on the full participation of women and girls, and that always begins with education. Here in Canada, we make sure that our children have the skills they need to live a full life in a rapidly changing world. As Minister of Youth and a father to young children, obviously, education is a personal priority of mine.

Last month we announced funding for a new program to teach kids the basics of coding and digital skills development. We are helping more teens from low-income communities complete high school. We are investing in programs that encourage young people, girls and boys alike, to take an interest in science, technology, engineering, and math.

[English]

We are building and repairing schools to ensure that every indigenous student living on-reserve receives a good education. For too long, these children have been neglected. That is unacceptable, and we must do more.

For the sake of boys and girls around the world, for the sake of our future, the time to act is now.

My friends, we know that progress starts as an idea rooted in conviction, brought to life by the right words, and driven into action with courage.

We call on our brothers and sisters around the world to speak boldly and without fear, knowing in their hearts that the right words at the right time can make change happen.

Malala, you chose hope. You chose dignity. You chose determination, and children around the world thank you for it. Today, in this country and in this chamber, we honour you.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, it is my great privilege to introduce to you a champion for education and a fearless new Canadian, Malala Yousafzai.

Ms. Malala Yousafzai (Co-Founder of Malala Fund): Bismillah hir rahman ir rahim. In the name of God, the most merciful, the most beneficent. Good afternoon. Bonjour. Assalaam-u-alikum.

Mr. Prime Minister, Madam Trudeau, Sophie, Mr. Speaker, members of the House, members of the Senate, distinguished guests, my parents, Ziauddin and Toor Pekai, and finally, the people of Canada, thank you so much for the warm welcome to your country.

This is my first trip to Canada but not my first attempt. On October 22, 2014, my father and I landed at the Toronto airport, excited for a first visit to your wonderful country. Soon we learned that a man had attacked Parliament Hill, killing a Canadian soldier, wounding others, and threatening leaders and civil servants in the building where I stand today.

Canadian security officials and professionals advised us to reschedule. With sorrow in our hearts, we headed back to England, promising to return to Canada one day.

The man who attacked Parliament Hill called himself a Muslim, but he did not share my faith. He did not share the faith of one and a half billion Muslims living in peace around the world. He did not share our Islam, a religion of learning, compassion, and mercy.

I am a Muslim and I believe that if you pick up a gun in the name of Islam and kill an innocent person, you are not Muslim anymore. You and the person who attacked Parliament Hill and all these terrorists do not share my faith.

Instead, he shared the hatred of the men who attacked the Quebec City mosque in January, killing six people while they were at prayer—the same hatred as the man who killed civilians and a police officer in London three weeks ago, the same hatred as the

men who killed 132 school children in Pakistan's Army Public School in Peshawar, the same hatred as the man who shot me and my two school friends.

These men have tried to divide us and destroy our democracies, our freedom of religion, our right to go to school, but we and you refuse to be divided. Canadians, wherever you were born and however you worship, stand together, and nothing proves this more than your commitment to refugees.

Around the world, we have heard about Canada's heroes.

We heard about the members of the First United Church here in Ottawa who sponsored newlyweds Amina and Ebrahim. A few months later, the family had their first child, a little girl named Marya. The church decided to raise more money to bring Ebrahim's brother and family to Canada so Marya could grow up with her cousins.

We heard about Jorge Salazar in Vancouver, who came to Canada as a child refugee, fleeing violence in Colombia. As a young adult, he is working with today's child immigrants and refugees, helping them adapt to the new culture and country.

I am very proud to announce that Farah Mohamed, a refugee who fled Uganda and came to Canada as a child, is Malala Fund's new CEO. A Canadian will now lead the fight for girls' education around the world.

Many people from my own country of Pakistan have found a promised land in Canada, from Maria Toorpakai Wazir, a famous squash player, to my relatives here today.

Like the refugees in Canada and all around the world, I have seen fear and experienced times when I did not know if I was safe or not. I remember how my mom used to put a ladder at the back of our house so that if anything happened, we could escape.

I still remember that I would read a Quranic verse, Ayat al-Kursi, every night to protect our family and as many people as I could.

I felt fear when I went to school, thinking that someone would stop me and harm me. I would hide my books under my scarf.

The sound of bombs would wake me up at night. Every morning I would hear the news that more innocent people had been killed. I saw men with big guns in the streets.

There is more peace now in my home of Swat Valley, Pakistan, but families like mine, from Palestine to Venezuela, Somalia to Myanmar, Iraq to Congo, are forced to flee their homes because of violence.

Your motto and your stand of "welcome to Canada" is more than a headline or a hashtag. It is the spirit of humanity that every single one of us would yearn for if our family was in crisis. I pray

that you continue to open your homes and your hearts to the world's most defenceless children and families, and I hope your neighbours will follow your example.

I am humbled to accept honorary citizenship of your country. While I will always be a proud Pashtun and a proud citizen of Pakistan, I am grateful to be an honorary member of your nation of heroes, though I still require a visa, but that is another discussion.

I was also very happy to meet Prime Minister Trudeau this morning. I am amazed by his embrace of refugees, his commitment to appointing Canada's first gender-balanced cabinet, and his dedication to keeping women and girls at the centre of your development strategy.

We have heard so much about Prime Minister Trudeau, but one thing has surprised me. People are always talking about how young he is. They say that he is the second-youngest prime minister in Canadian history. He does yoga. He has tattoos, and a large mole.

While I was coming here, everyone was telling me to shake the Prime Minister's hand and let them know how he looks in reality. People are just so excited about my meeting Prime Minister Trudeau that I do not think anyone cared about the honorary Canadian citizenship.

While it may be true that Prime Minister Trudeau is young and he is a young head of government, I would like to tell something to the children of Canada: you do not have to be as old as the very young Prime Minister Trudeau to be a leader.

Some Voices: Hear, hear!

Ms. Malala Yousafzai: I am still on page 7. There is a lot left. If you do a standing ovation again, you are going to get tired. That is just to let you know there is a lot left.

I want to share my story. I want to tell the children of Canada that when I was little, I used to wait to be an adult to lead, but I have learned that even a child's voice can be heard across the world.

To the young women of Canada, I want to say this: step forward, raise your voices, and the next time I visit, I hope to see more of you filling these seats.

To the men of Canada, be proud feminists and help women get opportunities equal to those of men.

To the leaders of Canada today in this room, though you may have different politics and policies and priorities, I know each one of you is trying to respond to some of our world's most pressing problems. I have travelled the world and met many people in many countries. I have first-hand experience and I have seen many problems that we are facing today—war, economic instability, climate change, and health crises—and I can tell you that the answer is girls.

Secondary education for girls can transform communities, countries, and our world.

Here is what the statistics say. I am saying it for those who still do not accept education as important—there are some—but I hope they will hear this.

If all girls went to school for 12 years, low- and middle-income countries would add \$92 billion per year to their economies.

Educated girls are less likely to marry young and contract HIV, and more likely to have healthy and educated children. The Brookings Institution called secondary education for girls as the best and most cost-effective investment against climate change.

When a country gives all its children secondary education, it cuts its risk of war in half. Education is vital for the security of the world, because extremism grows alongside inequality in places where people feel they have no opportunity, no voice, no hope.

When women are educated, there are more jobs for everyone. When mothers can keep their children alive and send them to school, there is hope, but around the world, 130 million girls are out of school today. They may not have read the studies and they may not know the statistics, but they understand that education is the only path to a brighter future, and they are fighting to go to school.

Last summer on a trip to Kenya, I was introduced to Rahma, the bravest girl I have ever met. When Rahma was 13, her family fled Somalia and came to Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp. She had never been inside a classroom, but she worked hard to catch up, and in a few years she graduated from primary school.

At 18, Rahma was in secondary school when her parents decided to move back to Somalia. They promised she could continue her education, but when her family returned to Somalia, there were no schools for her to attend. Her father said her education was finished and that she would soon marry a man in his 50s, a man she did not know.

Rahma remembered a friend from the refugee camp who had won a scholarship at a university in Canada. She borrowed a neighbour's Internet connection and contacted him through Facebook. Over the Internet, the university student in Canada sent her \$70. At night, Rahma snuck out of her house, bought a bus ticket, and set out on an eight-day-long trip back to the refugee camp, the only place she knew she could go to school.

Through the sustainable development goals, our nations promised every girl she would go to school for 12 years. We promised that donor countries and developing countries would work together to make this dream a reality for the poorest girls in the world. I know that politicians cannot keep every promise they make, but this is the one you must honour. World leaders can no longer expect girls like Rahma to fight this battle alone. We can gain peace, grow economies, and improve our public health and the air we breathe, or we can lose another generation of girls.

I stand with girls as someone who knows what it is like to flee your home and wonder if you will ever be able to go back to school. I stand with girls as someone who knows how it feels to have the right of education taken away and your dreams

threatened. I know where I stand. If you stand with me, I ask you to seize every opportunity for girls' education over the next year.

Dear Canada, I am asking you to lead once again.

First, make girls' education a central theme of your G7 presidency next year.

Second, use your influence to fill the global education funding gap. You raised billions of dollars and saved lives when you hosted the global fund replenishment in Montreal last year. Show the same leadership for education. Host the upcoming replenishment of Global Partnership for Education, bring world leaders together, and raise new funding for girls to go to school. If Canada leads, I know the world will follow.

Finally, prioritize 12 years of education and schooling for refugees. Today, only a quarter of refugee children can get secondary education. We should not ask children who flee their homes to also give up their dreams. We must recognize that young refugees are future leaders on whom we all depend for peace.

The world needs leadership based on serving humanity, not based on how many weapons you have. Canada can take that lead.

Our world has many problems, but we do not need to look far for the solution. We already have one. She is living in a refugee camp in Jordan. She is walking five kilometres to school in Guatemala. She is sewing footballs to pay enrolment fees in India. She is every one of the girls out of school around the world today. We know what to do, but we must look inside ourselves for the will to keep our promises.

Dear sisters and brothers, we have a responsibility to improve the world. When future generations read about us in their books, or on their iPads or whatever the next innovation will be, I do not want them to be shocked that 130 million girls could not go to school and we did nothing. I do not want them to be shocked that we did not stand up for child refugees as millions of families fled their homes. I do not want us to be known for failing them.

Let the future generations say we were the ones who stood up. Let them say we were the first to live in a world where all girls could learn and lead without fear. Let us be the ones who bring the change we want to see.

Thank you so much for listening.

[*Applause*]

[*The national anthem was sung*]

[*Translation*]

Hon. George Furey (Speaker of the Senate): Malala, Mr. Prime Minister, Madame Grégoire Trudeau, Madam Chief Justice, Excellencies, honourable senators, members of the House of Commons, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Malala, it is a great honour to welcome you here today. On behalf of all my parliamentary colleagues, I want to thank you for your inspiring speech.

[*English*]

Thank you for your inspiring words. The message which you bring resonates around the world. It is a message that empowers people to distinguish truth from lies and right from wrong.

The last time we gathered in this place was in June, when President Obama addressed us, standing where you stood today. We thanked him for his accomplishments during his eight year term, reflecting on a presidency that was soon to come to an end.

Today, we are here for a different purpose. Today is not so much about the past as it is about the future.

In these troubling times, it can be difficult to be optimistic. There is a great deal of fear in the world. Fear, as we all know, is a very powerful emotion. It feeds intolerance. It breeds division. As you, Malala, know too well, intolerance leads to unspeakable acts of brutality and oppression.

However, the clear antidote to fear is knowledge.

The pursuit of knowledge through education is an undeniable good. Education reveals that our differences are a source of strength, that ideas are exciting and enriching. Where it is allowed to flourish, education improves the lives of people everywhere. It allows women and girls to be equal to men and boys, to enable everyone to make equal contributions to make this a better world that we all live in.

The recognition of education's benefits must be taught, and taught courageously, especially in a world where falsehoods are so often held out as facts.

The French writer and philosopher Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once said that if you want to build a ship, do not send people to collect wood, do not assign them jobs, do not assign them tasks. Teach them, rather, to long for the immensity of the sea.

Your extraordinary example, Malala, teaches all of us to appreciate the value of education and long for the immensity of knowledge.

Collectively, we should all strive to further education in the world, to awaken reason where it sleeps, and to help improve the suffering of the poor and the oppressed.

We thank you once again, Malala, for your courage and determination in fighting for everyone, especially for the rights of girls and women to be educated in your country and around the world. While we do indeed face great challenges, your leadership shines a very bright light in an otherwise dark place.

We are so proud to have you as an honorary Canadian. No matter what our age, whether we are young or old, you are an example for us all. We all aspire to be Malala.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Speaker of the House of Commons): Malala, Prime Minister, Madame Grégoire Trudeau, Madam Chief Justice, Mr. Speaker of the Senate, my friend and classmate, Excellencies, honourable senators, members of the House of Commons, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Malala, it is my pleasure and privilege to thank you on behalf of your fellow Canadians for the very inspiring words you shared today.

You have been defending the right to education, especially for girls, since age 11. It is clear that your passion for this cause has only deepened over the years.

[*English*]

I know that you yourself have given credit for this determination to your father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, and your mother, Toor Pekai Yousafzai, both of whom nurtured your love of learning and encouraged you to pursue your dreams. As a father, I know it cannot have been easy for them to set aside a parent's natural desire to protect their child from the dangers that are all around, and to let her follow her heart. Therefore, I would like to thank your parents, Malala, for their courage and their generosity in sharing their only daughter with the world.
[*Translation*]

For many years now, you have been on a mission to promote education and peace, and you manage to strike a balance between your advocacy work and your studies.

[*English*]

In recognition of your remarkable work in promoting and defending educational rights, you have received a number of national and international honours, including, I must say, an honorary degree from the University of King's College in my city of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

[*Translation*]

You are at the dawn of a new chapter in your life, set to begin your university career. I am sure that it will be as remarkable and unique as you are.

[*English*]

Even as you fought for the right to learn, you have fought for the same right for others. As you have spoken up for children, you have taught them to speak up for themselves and to demand what is theirs. In other words, you may still be a student, Malala, but you have also become a teacher. If you look up at the galleries of this chamber, you will see hundreds of your students.

Mahatma Gandhi said that real education consists in drawing the best out of ourselves. This you have already accomplished. As you pursue your academic dreams, whatever they may be, I have no doubt that you will continue to make the world a better place.

Thank you.

[*Applause*]
