

**Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean
Speech on the Occasion of a Youth Dialogue on Civic
Engagement
Prague, Tuesday, December 2, 2008**



How are you?

Let me begin by saying that I am thrilled to be with you this morning.

I could think of no better way of opening our dialogue than by watching a live performance of the one and only, Gipsy.cz.

Please give them another round of applause.

I think Gipsy.cz's success can be attributed to the group's incredible ability to weave together traditional Romani music and hip-hop and to share a message that resonates across cultures and generations.

It is an ability that demonstrates the infectious capacity of young artists to bring people together.

And that same spirit of togetherness inspired the motto I chose as Governor General of Canada: "Breaking down solitudes."

"Breaking down solitudes" is about tearing down the walls of prejudice, hatred and indifference.

"Breaking down solitudes" is about abandoning the narrow notions of "everyone for himself or for his clan" so prevalent today.

"Breaking down solitudes" is about working hand-in-hand towards our dream of a better world.

During my visits to communities across Canada, Latin America, Africa, and Europe as Head of State, I have been so impressed to see how much that philosophy resonates among many youth who are implementing innovative projects to address global challenges.

That is why I am convinced that youth must be considered part of the solution and valuable partners—not only in the future, but here and now.

In fact, I have made youth a priority for my mandate, because I want to help share your unique message of hope with the world.

It was for that reason that I inaugurated the Governor General's Youth Dialogues series in 2007.

In conjunction with the new addition to the governor general's website, *Citizen Voices*, the Dialogues provide young people in Canada and around the globe with a space in which they can express their concerns and aspirations while connecting with decision-makers.

To mark this year's 250th anniversary of the birth of parliamentary democracy in Canada, this year's Youth Dialogues highlight the ways youth are helping redefining democratic life nationally and internationally.

And today, dear friends, I am joined by a delegation of Canadians representing civil society. They, like me, have come to learn about the ways you are engaging your counterparts in your communities, across the Czech Republic and overseas.

I must add that Canada is very pleased to cooperate with the Czech Republic on its Youth Mobility Program that came into force in November 2007.

That program allows for fruitful exchanges between students in both countries.

I have always believed in the power of dialogue to build bridges of understanding and reciprocity.

So in that spirit, I say, let the discussion begin!

Thank you.