

**Speech by Senator Vivienne Poy**

**Ethiopian Millennium Festival  
Organized by the  
Ethiopian Association in Toronto**

**September 8, 2007**

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Colleagues from the Federal and Provincial Governments, Hon. guests, ladies & gentlemen:

I am very happy to make it back in time from South Korea to celebrate the Ethiopian Millennium with you. I first heard about this celebration from my friend Haile Fenta. All around the world, Ethiopians are welcoming this special New Year together.

Enkutatash, your Ethiopian New Year, which officially falls on September 12<sup>th</sup> this year, is always a time for celebration as it occurs when the rains end, and the new crops emerge from the ground. It is a time of plenty, signalling new beginnings, and the arrival of spring. How nice it is to think of spring in September! In fact, today is more like summer! It seems that, for many ancient cultures, the first day of the new year is also the beginning of spring.

In Ethiopia, dancing and singing can be heard in every village. I love the word “Enkutatash,” meaning the "gift of jewels", in reference to the gifts bestowed on the Queen of Sheba when she returned from her visit to King Solomon in Jerusalem.

We all remember the excitement of the Western Millennium celebration 7 years ago. The whole world was alight with fireworks. I know this event will bring the Ethiopian community together in Toronto, throughout Canada and around the world.

Ethiopians have a proud history as the oldest independent country in Africa - the legendary country of Abyssinia. You are one of the oldest civilizations in the world. I learnt that Ethiopians tend not to migrate, so

your presence in Canada is relatively recent, dating back only to the 1980s. Ethiopia's loss is Canada's gain.

I have been delighted by the hospitality of the Ethiopians I have met, and have been introduced to your food and culture. Everything you brought from your native home adds so much to the City of Toronto, and to our multicultural country. Coming from a country which is so diverse, with more than 70 languages spoken there, no wonder a city like Toronto is home to one of the largest Ethiopian communities in Canada.

Today, there will be music, fashion, food, and of course, soccer - as we just witnessed the trophies being awarded to the various winning teams – soccer being a sport which is a passion that unites much of the world as we saw this summer in Canada. I am happy to take part in this festival and to welcome your new Millennium with you. This is a time for new beginnings, and your community has much to look forward to as we all celebrate together.

On behalf of the Senate of Canada, I wish all my Ethiopian and West African friends great success and happiness in your new home - Canada. Have fun and enjoy this special day.