

Ottawa. I know that some of you were involved. These meetings proved very constructive and the consultations are continuing.

I am encouraged by the reports I have received about the consultations and about the degree of consensus which is emerging:

- about the importance of trade to Canada
- about the vital link between domestic economic policies and a successful trade performance
- about the need for measures to ensure that our industries remain competitive
- about the need for a stronger national consensus on trade issues and about the need for concentration and careful management of our major trading relationships, particularly with the USA.

I can assure you - as the new Minister of Trade - I could not have arrived at a better time. Now comes the next and most difficult phase. We must now come to firm conclusions and attempt to design a statement of basic principles and objectives to govern the pursuit of our trading interests and the conduct of our trade relations. In embarking on this phase, let me urge you to let me know your views. Some of you have been at some of the consultations. Others have written. The advice has been thoughtful and we'll use it. I welcome more of the same.

In developing this final phase, we have very much in mind what is going on in Geneva. The two projects are very closely intermingled. Indeed, it is against the background and framework of the trade policy review that we are establishing our priorities for the GATT Ministerial meeting in Geneva in six weeks time.

I am satisfied, based on the consultations with the provinces and representatives of the private sector, that there is a consensus in this country that the multi-lateral trading framework as embodied in the GATT has served Canada well; that it provides the best framework within which to advance our commercial policy interests and that a priority Canadian objective should be to strengthen the GATT. Based on this assessment we developed our priorities for the meeting of Trade Ministers in Geneva next month.

The November meeting comes at a critical time. World trade is stagnating. We read and hear almost daily of new calls for reciprocity on a narrow sectoral basis; about