

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The signing of this Agreement is another historic step in the evolution of relations between Canada and the twelve CARICOM States. It is historic not least because the Agreement once again sets a precedent in the relations each of us has with the world at large, a precedent first set well over a century ago. At that time, what was then the "Province of Canada" sought to negotiate a preferential tariff with what were the "West Indies". And, not long after, the Honourable George Foster, a Minister in the first Government of Canada, as it is now constituted, visited the Caribbean region. This was the first direct government to government contact seeking to promote economic relations between our respective states. Since then, the economic relationship between us has broadened and deepened though outside events occasionally have had a negative effect.

Against this historic background, the conclusion today of the Canada/CARICOM Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement thus becomes a moving and an exciting experience for a Canadian,

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