

Mr. Chairman,

Opening the Fifth Ministerial Session of the World Food Council in Ottawa last month, Canada's new Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, described hunger as "an affront to human dignity". There are now more hungry in the world than the estimated 455 million at the time of the 1974 World Food Conference. Even worse ravages may come. Yet the world's fields and oceans produce enough food to feed mankind. In this light, Mr. Clark said, "nature is no longer the problem: the problem is man".

The world food situation is a central international issue for Canada. Our country is viewed as a "breadbasket", with food production many times our own needs. Yet there is hardly any issue which can arouse as much interest, concern, and anger among ordinary Canadians as food shortage and food maldistribution in any part of the world. Nor is this interest just that of producers and traders, although food is and will remain a vital export sector for our country. Canadians are glad to see our food aid reaching hungry people, but our producers have no interest in maintaining dependence on food aid or even essential food imports. Rather they want to see adequate commercial demand in a world where more people and countries are able to feed themselves and sell their own products.

It is in Canada's and other advanced industrial countries' basic interest to support stepped-up investment and a dramatic increase in food production in the developing countries. This will help these countries meet the nutritional needs of their growing populations and promote their role as equal partners on the world stage. It is clear that the increasing demand for food grains is greater than can be achieved by North American farmers alone. Meeting these demands will require huge investments in both developed and developing countries.

The whole field of development co-operation makes most sense to Canadians when it is aimed at promoting greater self-sufficiency, especially in food, for the poorest and most vulnerable people. This kind of "aid", successfully pursued, will be supported by Canadian taxpayers, no matter how difficult our economic conditions at home. For this reason, Prime Minister Clark was able at the World Food Council to commit his government without reservation to continue to contribute \$400 million every year to agricultural and rural development through bilateral and multilateral channels. Non-governmental organizations and agricultural research groups are also vital channels for this co-operation.

Although Canada is a significant element in the world food system, we recognize that we are just a part of a much bigger picture. It is this picture we should be critically scrutinizing, five years after the international community met, in an atmosphere of crisis, at the World Food Conference.