

With citizenship issues not fully resolved in Latvia and Estonia, parliamentarians there confront the difficult task of representing members of society who do not vote in the national elections. The challenge is particularly difficult in small countries which have reason to feel vulnerable next to larger neighbours. Indeed, in Estonia, Russian troops are still quartered a mere 100 meters from the parliament buildings.

This government is keenly aware of your security concerns. We firmly believe that NATO [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] should welcome new members in contributing further to the stability of Europe. We will contribute to the full extent of our capacities to NATO's Partnership for Peace; and we urge your governments to do the same.

Associate membership in the Western European Union and the European Union has been granted to most of your countries. We expect full membership will follow and encourage you to prepare for it.

A stable economic environment truly is the basis for long-term prosperity. We are encouraging foreign direct investment. Canadians have been hesitant to enter your markets but trade levels are steadily increasing. We expect this to continue and acknowledge your efforts to facilitate trade.

We will also continue our efforts to further expand trade and investment in Central and Eastern Europe.

A month ago, I went to Poland and Ukraine accompanied by a delegation of business people. During my meetings with President Walesa and President Kravchuk, I expressed Canada's support for their process of economic reform. I also wanted to hear their respective security concerns.

While in Poland, I announced new Canadian programs in support of that country's agricultural reforms. In my meetings with Prime Minister Pawlak and Foreign Affairs Minister Olechowski I also discussed possible youth exchanges and opportunities to facilitate trade.

Canada strongly supports Ukraine's democratic and economic development. No other country contributed as much as Canada toward the recent Ukrainian parliamentary elections. In my meetings with President Kravchuk, Minister of Foreign Affairs Zlenko, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Slepichev and Minister of the Economy Shpek, I emphasized that a friendlier business environment is an essential ingredient of economic reform.

I welcome this opportunity today to announce the appointment of an Honorary Consul in Sofia. Bulgaria occupies an important geo-