

by the Community, as being the best possible arrangement under the circumstances, and the widest one, given all of the elements that are in play.

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Relations with France

Now...I wish to speak very briefly about our relations with France. Of course, I do not need to remind you that relations between Canada and France are based on historical, linguistic and cultural affinities as well as on the development of an economic and political co-operation that I consider very important.

However, those naturally harmonious relations are going through a difficult period, particularly since Mr Lévesque visited France last November. It is partially caused by the domestic situation in Canada and the ambiguity shown since then by the French Government concerning the internal situation in Canada. After the visit of the Quebec Premier in France, we asked the French Government for more details on its policy concerning relations between Canada and France and the proposal for France-Quebec annual meetings at the prime minister level. Since then we have received written assurance from the French Government that its policy concerning Canada remains unchanged and that it will not interfere in the Canadian political debates and will respect the Canadian constitutional framework. We took note of this assurance and I for one consider that the issue about the Lévesque visit in France is closed. However, we shall continue to remind the French Administration of the necessity to consult us before signing agreements with provincial governments, just as we shall continue our discussions on the issue of prime ministers' annual meetings.

We are also concerned by other aspects of our relations with France. For instance, their intention to prohibit the importation into France of young-seal skins. I met my French counterpart, Mr de Guiringaud, in Brussels, specifically to discuss this issue, two weeks ago. In the meantime, we have sent to the French Administration a memorandum to demonstrate that this species is not in danger and that it is scientifically proved that the slaughter means used are the least traumatic for the animal and that allowances have been made within GATT for those products. I hope that the French Government will recognize the validity of our argument and will change its intention of banning young-seal-skin imports into France.

The issues of the delimitation of the territorial limits between Canada and France near Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon and our fishing relations continue to present some difficulties. The fact that early this year France and Canada proclaimed a 200-mile economic and fishing zone gives an even greater sense of urgency to the question of an agreement on the delimitation of our marine boundaries, and in that regard the recent 1976 English-French award with respect to the English Channel had the effect of reinforcing Canada's legal position. The government of Newfoundland maintains that there cannot be negotiations with France before the question of federal-provincial jurisdiction has been dealt with. That is why we want the province to participate in the negotiation process and a firmer stand by the Federal Government should normally help reach that objective. The interim fishing agreement reached on December 30, 1976, will expire at the end of this month. On December 9 last, we agreed *ad referendum* to extend to 1978 all the 1977 arrangements, except for the