

## France-Canada Economic Commission Meets in Ottawa

The desire to diversify their trading relations, strengthen transatlantic ties, promote the development of exchanges; strategic partnerships and investment were among the items stressed when France's "Minister-Delegate" for Finance and Foreign Trade Yves Galland (cover photo, left) and Canada's International Trade Minister Arthur C. Eggleton (cover photo, right) met in Ottawa March 25, 1996.

The occasion was the 10th ministerial meeting of the France-Canada Joint Economic Commission.

The two partners, both G-7 members, noted the spectacular growth and diversity in trade and investment between the two countries. They observed, as well, that more could be done to elevate economic relations to the level to which they aspire.

And, they recognized the influential position they occupy in their respective new regional associations — France with the European Union, and Canada with NAFTA. Far from being an obstacle, this new reality is viewed as an asset to be exploited. The dynamism of investment between France and Canada appeared, along with technological partnerships, to be the most promising avenue for the future development of Franco-Canadian co-operation.

In addition to attaching great importance to developing a Canada-EU policy statement and action plan, the ministers agreed to:

- \* create two bilateral task forces, one on information technologies, the other on multimedia;

- \* step up co-operation in environmental industries (particularly water treatment and waste

treatment);

- \* intensify their co-operation in the area of competition policy;

- \* encourage joint initiatives by the two countries' private sectors and business people, particularly in the areas of high tech, strategic partnerships and investment.

To mark this tenth meeting — the theme of which was Franco-Canadian Cooperation in the High-Tech Field — and to adjust its working procedures to the

new economic realities, the ministers invited, for the first time, French and Canadian business leaders to take part in the discussions and to explore partnership possibilities for the year 2000 and beyond.

The widened discussions, including business people, served to identify — or provide more information on — the most buoyant strategic sectors: information

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### Franco-Canadian Economic Relations

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with 1.6 per cent of the total and over 100 Canadian firms investing.

In the same period, the value of French investment in Canada increased by 350 per cent. France is now the fifth-largest foreign investor in Canada, with \$5.3 billion (3 per cent of total foreign investment in Canada) invested by over 340 firms.

These investments are spread across the country and have sustained 40,000 jobs, including 23,000 in the manufacturing sector.

#### Strategic Partnerships, Technological Exchanges

It is difficult to quantify but there is a solid, albeit recent, tradition of strategic partnerships and technological exchanges between France and Canada, particularly in high-tech industries which have generated consequent investments.

This tradition probably started with the Montréal Métro, for which France transferred its technology to Canada. The technology transfer was so successful that it led to the development of

a local industry which gained international stature.

Other fruitful experiences followed, notably industrial co-operation projects in the air and rail transport sectors.

#### Science and Technology

Canada and France also enjoy a rich and mutually rewarding relationship in the science and technology sector.

At present there are 23 co-operation agreements between Canada and France, the latter being the world's fourth-largest investor in R&D.

Co-operation with France is of particular importance in the European context, especially following the recently signed Canada-EU co-operation agreement on Science and Technology. France has thus become a special partner for Canada, giving Canadian researchers access to European projects.

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