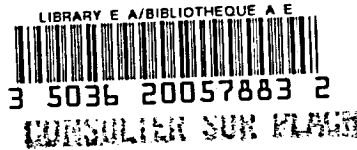


TASK FORCE ON  
CENTRAL AND  
EASTERN EUROPE

GROUPE DE TRAVAIL  
SUR L'EUROPE CENTRALE  
ET L'EUROPE DE L'EST



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JOINT MESSAGE BY BARBARA McDOUGALL AND MICHAEL WILSON

Partners in Change

This decade marks an extraordinary period in history — one characterized by both uncertainty and exciting opportunity. All across Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, nations are rebuilding from the ground up, simultaneously launching the construction of democratic societies and market economies. The framing of this new Europe has ramifications around the world. That is why Canada has moved quickly to assist, working closely with our Central and East European partners in change.

In just two short years, Canada's Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe has built an impressive technical assistance program designed to promote democracy, support the transition to market-based economies and increase Canadian trade and investment links with the region. With some 300 projects under way, Canada's program has helped to lay a strong foundation for reform in Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and Romania. In Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Canadian expertise is helping to put in place reinforcing structures for the countries' recently reclaimed independence. And in the largest and most challenging reconstruction of all, the Task Force has launched a range of projects that are transferring valuable skills and "know how" — the tools of the future — to the countries of the former Soviet Union, primarily Russia and Ukraine.

With a reputation as an innovative and effective program, our technical assistance initiative is truly Canadian in character. The world-class expertise of Canadian partners from all sectors — private and public, academic and voluntary, business and labour — has effectively responded to many of the top priorities in Central and Eastern Europe. Canada's multicultural community has contributed not only their professional skills, but also their linguistic capabilities and cultural understanding, making Canada a preferred partner across the region.

Canadians have come to realize that we all have a direct stake in ensuring the success of democratic and economic reform in Central and Eastern Europe. Success will result in a more stable, peaceful and prosperous world — failure, the opposite. Canadian business, for example, has been quick to see the opportunities in the region's vast markets. This involvement is critical; while governments can establish the necessary conditions for a market economy, it is individual entrepreneurs who make it work.

The continuing pace of reform in Central and Eastern Europe is encouraging. There is, however, no blueprint for success. We have seen, in Yugoslavia and elsewhere, that it is easier to tear down than build up. As a fragile new Europe emerges, we must continue to work closely with our Central and East European partners in the shaping of a strong and stable framework for our common future. ■

The Honourable Barbara McDougall  
Secretary of State for External Affairs

The Honourable Michael Wilson  
Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and  
Minister for International Trade

External Affairs and  
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