

As you can see from the course we have followed thus far, the Government is pursuing a policy of gradual relaxation. The initial threat to our gold and dollar reserves has been successfully met, - the tide has turned in our favour. A continuation of present favourable trends will enable the Government to consider making further relaxations from time to time during 1949.

The improvement in our reserves, and the consequent relaxation of restrictions, has been welcome to every Canadian as well as to our friends across the border. It would be misleading, however, to exaggerate the extent of our improved position. To the extent that the progress made thus far is due to the restrictions on imports, a programme which we are pledged to abandon as soon as possible, and to the operation of the Marshall Plan which is of a temporary nature, we cannot look to them as positive or final solutions. We must make more headway in the positive part of our programme before we can be confident that we are completely out of the woods. We have shown remarkable recuperative powers, but the continuing international political difficulties and the unsettled world conditions constitute an ominous sign of the kind of trading world in which we now live. Because of the volume and character of our external trade to-day, the exchange reserves that can now be regarded as providing a satisfactory minimum are much higher than they were before the war. The future programme for the relaxation of restrictions must give adequate consideration to the need for Canada to reach a level of exchange reserves which is adequate in the present disturbed conditions of world trade.

I can assure you that the Government will push forward with constructive programmes until a complete and stable solution is reached. Artificial trade restrictions are completely foreign to our long-term trade policy. I am convinced that the ultimate solution of present trade and exchange difficulties not only for Canada, but for the world, will be found in the expansion of world trade and the elimination as soon as possible of artificial barriers, restrictions and discriminatory practices.

Commencing next April Canada will participate in a new series of tariff negotiations with twelve and possibly more countries which desire to become parties to the Geneva Agreement. This should serve to broaden the benefits we have already obtained and help to open new markets for Canadian goods.

Every Canadian is proud of the rapid growth and dynamic expansion which has taken place in Canada in the last decade. These are difficult times and no one can predict the future, but if anything is certain -- Canada's continued economic growth is certain. Alberta will be in the forefront of that growth. There will be new and increasing opportunities for your region to continue its development. Oil is only one of your great resources. Your city is situated in the heart of a rich and diversified agricultural area. Your region is endowed with unlimited supplies of coal and natural gas, all basic essentials to modern industry. You are located on the threshold to the vast region of the Canadian Northwest. We cannot foresee what new treasures this undeveloped area will disclose, but the valuable finds of uranium and gold, and the search for oil and base metals now taking place, are forerunners of very promising possibilities. The characteristic energy and enterprise which I know you will apply to these rich endowments assure the future progress of your city and province and will enhance the welfare of our country.

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