

News Release

Communiqué

Minister for
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Trade



Ministre du
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CANADIAN AMBASSADOR ELECTED CHAIRMAN
OF GATT COUNCIL

Minister for International Trade, John C. Crosbie, welcomed today the election by the contracting parties of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) of Mr. John Weekes, Canada's Ambassador to the GATT, as Council Chairman of the multilateral trade organization for the coming year. As Council Chairman, Ambassador Weekes will oversee the operations of the GATT's regular decision-making body. It is also customary GATT practice for the Chairman of Council to be named in the succeeding year as Chairman of the Contracting Parties, the designation given to GATT members when they act collectively, and the senior-most body in the GATT.

"Canadians can take pride in the election of Ambassador Weekes as Council Chairman", Minister Crosbie said. "Canada has been a leading voice within the GATT for the dismantling of trade barriers and the strengthening of the multilateral trade system throughout the organization's forty-year history. The Government's two-track approach to trade liberalization rests on a continued commitment to the GATT and the enhancement of bilateral export opportunities with the United States through the Free Trade Agreement. Canada is a trading nation. Our economic future lies in ensuring that Canadians can trade in a more open, secure, and predictable international environment", the Minister concluded.

Canada was a founding member of the GATT, which came into effect in 1948. Current membership totals 96 countries, accounting for over four-fifths of world trade.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Born in Toronto, Mr. Weekes joined External Affairs in 1966 following his graduation from the University of Toronto.

Past assignments have included postings to the Multilateral Trade Negotiations in Geneva, from 1973 to 1979, a diplomatic posting to Belgrade from 1968 to 1971, and, as Director General of the Trade Policy Bureau in Ottawa from 1983 to 1987. In September 1987, he was appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Secretariat of the GATT in Geneva.