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TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

OTTAWA -- Canada should advise the Reagan Administration as early as possible of its readiness to begin trade negotiations, International Trade Minister James Kelleher said today.

At the Québec Summit in March, the Minister and Mr. Clayton Yeutter, the United States Trade Representative, were given six months to examine ways to reduce or eliminate all trade barriers between the two countries. Mr. Kelleher's recommendations were tabled in the House of Commons today.

In his report, the Minister said Mr. Yeutter has indicated in their discussions that the Reagan Administration would favour negotiation to improve the access of United States investors and exporters to the Canadian market.

Canada

"He and I agree that our respective concerns and objectives are amenable to a mutually beneficial negotiation process," Mr. Kelleher's letter said.

Wide-ranging discussion and analysis over the last six months have convinced him that there is a high degree of dissatisfaction with the status quo across the country, the Minister said. "I was told repeatedly that the current level of unemployment is unsatisfactory and directly related to the uncertainty in our trade relations with our principal trading partner."

"I am satisfied that there is a strong provincial consensus in favour of bilateral negotiations with the United States to secure and enhance our access to that market," the letter said.

"A trade agreement will save Canadian jobs now threatened by protectionist measures in the short term and create better jobs for the future....Canada has reached a plateau of maturity which helps to define the opportunity before us. Our economic strength and cultural integrity have evolved to the point where we can enter negotiations

with confidence. The very act of opening our minds to negotiations will be an expression of faith by Canadians in themselves, in their industries and in their institutions," Mr. Kelleher said.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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