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MCDUGALL ANNOUNCES OPENING OF VILNIUS OFFICE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today announced the opening of the Office of the Canadian Embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania. With the opening of the new office, Canada now has a presence in all three Baltic States.

"Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia can count on Canada's continuing friendship as they resume their places in the international community," said Mrs. McDougall. "We are actively supporting their efforts to strengthen their democratic institutions and implement economic reforms."

The Minister noted that Canada has already backed up its pledges of support with concrete assistance, including:

- 19 projects approved or under way in Canada's technical assistance program for the Baltic States, which includes support under the Renaissance Eastern Europe program to Canadian companies wanting to establish a presence in the region;
- \$1 million in humanitarian aid to be delivered by the Canadian Red Cross in March; and
- negotiations under way on the Government of Canada's conditional offer of \$10 million Export Development Corporation lines of credit to each Baltic State.

The Vilnius office is a satellite of Canada's Embassy in Stockholm, which is accredited to Lithuania. Through the Vilnius office, Stockholm-based Embassy officials will provide trade and investment-promotion assistance, as well as limited visa and consular services.

The Minister announced the opening of similar offices in Tallinn, Estonia, in November, and Riga, Latvia, in December.

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For further information, media representatives may contact:

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BACKGROUNDER

CANADIAN OFFICES IN THE BALTIC STATES

- With the opening of the Office of the Canadian Embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania, Canada has established a presence in all three Baltic States. Similar offices were opened in Tallinn, Estonia, in November, and in Riga, Latvia, last December.
- Canada's Embassy in Stockholm is accredited to Lithuania and Latvia, and our Embassy in Helsinki to Estonia.
- The Vilnius and Riga offices are satellites of the Stockholm Embassy, while the Tallinn office is a satellite of the Helsinki Embassy.
- These offices are staffed by locally engaged employees, who act in a liaison capacity only, providing support and information to Embassy officials in Stockholm and Helsinki.
- Stockholm and Helsinki Embassy officials visit the satellite offices regularly.
- These officials provide consular and immigration services in the Baltic States on a periodic basis; the satellite offices serve as points of contact, particularly in emergency situations, and provide limited consular/immigration services and information.
- Under the guidance of the Canadian Embassies in Stockholm and Helsinki, the offices will assist Canadian exporters to identify new markets in the Baltic States and provide trade and investment assistance to Canadian businesses.
- Canadian companies seeking information on opportunities in the region should contact the relevant Embassy first.

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