

News Release

June 28, 1995

No. 116

MacLAREN TO ATTEND FIRST WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRADE MINISTERIAL

The Honourable Roy MacLaren, Minister for International Trade, today announced that he will attend the first Western Hemisphere Trade Ministerial in Denver, Colorado, on June 30.

At the Summit of the Americas last December in Miami, elected heads of government pledged to negotiate a free trade area of the Americas by 2005 and directed their ministers responsible for trade to meet by June 1995.

"This meeting is a critical 'first step' toward negotiating a free trade area of the Americas. Canada strongly supports this initiative as it will increase our individual and collective prosperity and strengthen the drive toward greater trade liberalization worldwide," said Mr. MacLaren.

Ministers are expected to agree on a program of preparatory work to be completed by officials prior to their next meeting in March 1996. They will also review the work undertaken to date by regional fora, including a preliminary report from the Organization of American States' Special Committee on Trade.

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A backgrounder is attached.

For further information, media representatives may contact:

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Backgrounder

A FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

At the Summit of the Americas last December, elected heads of government from 34 countries in the Western Hemisphere met in Miami in the spirit of greater co-operation on issues of mutual interest and concern.

Government leaders approved a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action that highlighted the Summit's themes of liberalizing trade, guaranteeing sustainable development and strengthening democracy.

On the trade front, Summit leaders committed to negotiate a free trade area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2005.

The Plan of Action called for:

- ministers responsible for trade to meet in June 1995 and March 1996 to determine the best means of achieving the FTAA and to initiate preparatory work to this end;
- an analysis of how existing trading arrangements in the hemisphere fit together and how they differ, means of improving disciplines among these arrangements and ways of bringing them together; and
- the Organization of American States' Special Committee on Trade to assist in the systemization of regional data and to continue the study of economic integration arrangements, including the preparation of brief comparative descriptions of existing trade agreements in the Hemisphere.