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THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA JOINS WITH THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPACE SHUTTLE SYSTEM

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

The Department of External Affairs announces today that an exchange of diplomatic notes took place today between Canada and the U.S.A. confirming the agreement between the National Research Council of Canada and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for participation by the National Research Council in the development of the Advanced Space Transportation System.

Under this agreement, the NRCC, through contractual arrangements with Canadian industry, will design, develop and construct the first flight unit of the Space Shuttle Remote Manipulator System (SRMS). The SRMS is a fifty-foot arm-like device attached to the cargo bay of the Orbiter spacecraft, the orbiting element of the Space Shuttle. The SRMS will be used to move scientific satellites and other space vehicles from the cargo bay and place them in orbit. It will also be used to retrieve recoverable payloads for return to earth.

SPAR Aerospace Products Limited is the prime contractor for the SRMS and with RCA Limited, CAE Electronics Limited and Dilworth, Secord, Meagher and Associates Limited, its principal subcontractors, has been working on the preliminary design since November 1975. SPAR and the subcontractors are also designing and building a simulation facility to simulate on earth the conditions under which the SRMS will be required to operate in space.

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The agreement is similar to the NASA agreement with the European Space Agency (ESA) whereby ESA is to design, develop and build the SPACELAB, a manned space laboratory that fits in and remains with the Orbiter Spacecraft during a SPACELAB mission.

Both Canada and Europe are funding the cost of the research and development for their respective parts of the overall Space Transportation System program. In terms of direct benefits, the NASA/NRCC agreement assures Canada access to both the Space Shuttle for spacecraft launches and service missions and to the SPACELAB for experiments and applications, and in the interim, to conventional launch facilities. Access to space is needed by Canada not only to maintain viable research programs in the space sciences but also to exploit the expanding potential of satellite communications and sensing systems. In addition, the RMS program will improve the Canadian industrial capacity for the design and construction of advanced space systems and provide a technological base from which Canada could participate in the future global market for remote handling systems capable of operating in a variety of environments.