



news release

Date **June 24, 1994**

No. 132

For release

ESTONIAN FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT CANADA

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today announced that Estonian Foreign Minister Juri Luik will visit Ottawa and Toronto on June 27 and 28.

"This is the first visit of a foreign minister from Estonia since the breakup of the Soviet Union. It provides an important opportunity to discuss political and economic developments in the Baltics, as well as the withdrawal of Russian troops from Estonia. It also allows both countries to pursue trade opportunities," said Mr. Ouellet.

Mr. Ouellet and Mr. Luik will sign an Agreement on Trade and Commerce which sets out the the rights, obligations and rules that will govern trade and commercial relations between Canada and Estonia. Under this agreement, each country accords most-favoured-nation status to the other.

In addition to meeting with Mr. Ouellet and officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Mr. Luik will meet with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Brian Tobin, and the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Jean-Robert Gauthier. Discussions in Ottawa will focus on trade and investment, technical assistance, peacekeeping and fisheries.

On June 28, Mr. Luik will travel to Toronto for meetings with Canadian companies with interests in Estonia.

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For further information, media representatives may contact:

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Backgrounder

CANADA-ESTONIA RELATIONS

Canada's Relations with Estonia

- Canada never recognized the annexation of Estonia by the USSR and, in August 1991, was one of the first Western countries to reestablish relations.
- Canada has repeatedly called for the early, orderly, and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Estonia and its Baltic neighbours. Canada has also underlined this support in meetings with Russian officials. Canada expects Russia to abide by its commitment to withdraw the last of its troops by August 31, 1994.
- Roughly one third of Estonia's population is Russian-speaking. Observers from the United Nations, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and the Council of Europe agree that Estonia is not abusing the rights of its minorities. Nonetheless, poor relations between the two communities are of concern to the international community. The CSCE currently has a long-term "preventive diplomacy" mission on the ground whose purpose is to promote better relations and help build a civic society in Estonia. Canada has participated in this mission.
- There are 21 350 Canadians of Estonian origin in Canada. Canada's Estonian community, concentrated in Toronto, is the largest in the world outside Estonia.

Trade

- Bilateral trade totalled just over \$15 million in 1993.
- Canada has granted General Preferential Tariff (GPT) treatment to products imported from Estonia, allowing better access to the Canadian market.
- Canada and Estonia have negotiated an Agreement on Trade and Commerce. It establishes a framework of balanced rights and obligations, as well as agreed rules for the conduct of trade and commercial relations between the two countries. Under the agreement, each country accords most-favoured-nation status to the other.

Technical Assistance

- Since September 1991, the Government has committed more than \$4 million in technical assistance to Estonia. This assistance is targeted at democracy and good governance, education, health care, and trade and investment. For example, Canadians have trained Estonian teachers in curriculum development and public servants in managing a free-market economy.
- Canada has also provided \$3.2 million in humanitarian assistance to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. An additional \$1.5 million in humanitarian assistance was committed to the Baltic countries in April.