

News Release

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MACLAREN CONFIRMS CANADA'S SUPPORT FOR MEXICAN PRESIDENT SALINAS DE GORTARI AS HEAD OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

The Honourable Roy MacLaren, Minister for International Trade, today confirmed that Canada will support the candidacy of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the President of Mexico, as the first Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Canada's support for Mr. Salinas de Gortari's candidacy was announced on Tuesday by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien following a meeting with Mexican President-Elect Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon. When it is approved by the signatories of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the WTO will oversee world trade policy and settle disputes between nations on a multilateral basis.

"We believe that Carlos Salinas de Gortari is the ideal candidate to lead the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization at this crucial juncture in the history of the global trading system. He has demonstrated many times his outstanding ability to grapple successfully with the challenges of globalization," said Mr. MacLaren.

Before his election as President in 1988, Mr. Salinas de Gortari developed an excellent reputation as an economist and administrator. As President, he promoted market-oriented structural reform and removed trade and investment barriers from the Mexican market. Under his leadership, Mexico joined with the United States and Canada in the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement, became a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, joined the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum and became a founding member of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.



"The first Director-General of the new World Trade Organization will face major challenges in getting the organization up and running and in establishing its authority and credentials," Mr. MacLaren added.

The World Trade Organization will provide the institutional support for the management of the complex body of international trade rules encompassed in the existing GATT, as well as in the new agreements negotiated in the Uruguay Round, including such issues as trade in services, investment and intellectual property.

- 30 -

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