

Minister of Industry,  
Science and Technology and  
Minister for International Trade



Ministre de l'Industrie, des  
Sciences et de la Technologie et  
ministre du Commerce extérieur

## Statement

## Déclaration

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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY  
THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL WILSON  
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND  
MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE  
TO INTRODUCE MEXICO'S SECRETARY  
OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY,  
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JAIME SERRA PUCHE,  
AT A LUNCHEON HOSTED BY  
THE CANADIAN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

MONTREAL, Quebec  
February 16, 1993

Mr. President, Excellency, Mr. Minister, Members of the Canadian Institute for International Affairs (CIIA), Ladies and Gentlemen:

Allow me first to thank Richard French and the members of the Montreal CIIA for organizing this excellent event. I am sure that it will be useful as well as enjoyable.

I am very pleased to welcome in our midst a colleague and friend, the Secretary of Trade and Industry for Mexico, His Excellency Dr. Jaime Serra Puche.

Secretary Serra has held the reins of Mexico's international trade for four years now. We had the pleasure of welcoming him and his colleagues to Ottawa yesterday for the ninth annual meeting of the Canada-Mexico Joint Ministerial Committee.

This meeting strengthened relations between our two countries by giving Canadian and Mexican ministers an opportunity to discuss policy, economics, trade and other areas of mutual interest.

To complement these productive consultations, Secretary Serra has come to Montreal to see some concrete examples of highly successful partnerships between Canadian and Mexican business people.

It is important to note that Canadian companies did not wait for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to come into effect before starting to take advantage of the increasingly attractive outlets available in Mexico, and its increasingly open markets.

Right here in Quebec, and especially in greater Montreal, companies have already begun to take advantage of these opportunities. As Mexico continues to reduce and eventually does away with its tariff and other non-tariff barriers completely, Canadian companies will find even more outlets there.

Our visit with Secretary Serra this morning to two major companies in the Montreal region underscored the importance of the Mexican market for Canada.

Canadair and SR Telecom, along with Atelier Montréal Facilities, which we will visit this afternoon, are already doing business with Mexico. I am talking about business in the tens of millions of dollars, with a potential for hundreds of millions.

Sitting at my table is David Cherem, an investor in Mexico and the President of Artopex Plus, a company that employs 300 people in Laval, Quebec. In addition to his investment in Artopex Plus, Mr. Cherem will be responsible for distributing the company's products in Mexico. What better example could there be of the possibilities of partnership between Canada and Mexico?

This indicates, as our guest Secretary Serra has pointed out in the past, that the "NAFTA has a bright future because of the complementary elements of our economies."

It is important to note that these Quebec enterprises are all manufacturing companies that either directly sell their products to Mexico -- like SR Telecom and Bombardier -- or that have concluded service contracts with their Mexican counterparts -- like Atelier Montréal Facilities. They have the common desire to take advantage of the market opportunities that are already opening in Mexico almost a full year before the NAFTA is due to come in effect.

Trade liberalization leads to new opportunities for Canadian exporters of goods and services. That is why trade liberalization has been and continues to be a primary objective of the Government of Canada.

We achieved freer trade with our most important trading partner, the United States, through the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement more than four years ago. Now we have extended those provisions -- together with some improvements -- to Mexico, our largest trading partner in Latin America. And our overall goal is to further liberalize trade worldwide. That is what we have been working toward in the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations in Geneva.

That is also Mexico's goal, and no one is better equipped to handle that daunting task than Secretary Serra.

Not only has he led his country to a successful conclusion of the NAFTA, but he is also in charge of the trade negotiations with Colombia and Venezuela (the Group of Three), as well as chairing ministerial meetings in the GATT. A former university professor of economics, Secretary Serra worked for several years in Mexico's Secretariat of Finance before becoming Secretary of Trade and Industry.

As former Minister of Finance, I must admit that a solid grounding in the economic realities of one's country is useful indeed when negotiating complex trade agreements.

Secretary Serra has been at the helm of Mexico's foreign trade for over four years now. As colleagues in charge of negotiations of the NAFTA for our respective countries, we have faced each other many times during the 14 months leading to a successful agreement.

Let me tell you that during the course of the NAFTA negotiations, I have come to appreciate and respect Secretary Serra's strong negotiating skills as well as his sense of humour. That reminds me of the third ministerial meeting, in Zacatecas.

Our host had taken us to a museum of Indian artifacts in that colourful Mexican city. Seeing all the traditional masks on the wall, I couldn't help but remark to him that now I knew where he got his many facial expressions during the course of the negotiations.

Please welcome one of the strongest proponents of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and within the administration of President Salinas, one of its chief architects, His Excellency Secretary Dr. Jaime Serra Puche.