

# Statement

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY  
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
AT THE INAUGURATION  
OF THE CANADIAN EMBASSY IN BEIRUT**

**BEIRUT, Lebanon  
January 26, 1995**



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

**Canada**

Your Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs, distinguished guests:

On October 22, 1994, in Montreal, I had the pleasure and the honour of being welcomed by the Lebanese-Syrian Canadian Association of Quebec. The Association was celebrating its 75th anniversary, thus marking the richness and uniqueness of the ties between Canada and Lebanon. At this event, I took the opportunity to publicize the Government of Canada's decision to reopen its embassy in Beirut early in 1995.

Today, I am both proud and happy to be among you, here in Beirut, to fulfil this promise. Circumstances forced us to suspend our embassy's operations during one of the darkest periods of the war in 1985. Yet the unique relationship that exists between our two countries was clearly too important for this situation to continue. I would like to pay tribute today to Ms. Salwa Assily and the other members of the local staff for their exceptional loyalty and dedication in performing their duties from the Mayflower Hotel.

The winds of change are blowing in Lebanon. The most spectacular sign of change is the impressive reconstruction effort launched by the people of Lebanon and their government. This and many other reasons made it imperative for Canada to return to Lebanon, for the history of our relations teaches us that there is no substitute for the importance of human interaction.

Canada and Lebanon enjoy a truly special relationship that dates back to the arrival of Lebanese immigrants in Canada at the turn of the century; and it has grown since then. When Lebanon was in the throes of war, Canada opened its doors to tens of thousands of Lebanese refugees. These new arrivals have contributed to every aspect of Canadian life, whether in politics, in business or in the arts.

On this historic day, I am very happy to be accompanied by Senator Pierre de Bané and by Mac Harb, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, both of whom are of Lebanese origin.

Even though he is not Lebanese, our colleague, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, played a special role for years by promoting Canada's relations with the Arab world.

About 150 000 - or 60 per cent - of the Lebanese men and women who have settled in Canada have chosen to live in Quebec, some of them in my own riding. I am thus well aware of their achievements, and I salute them.

Many other Lebanese men and women have studied and worked in Canada, and then returned to Lebanon. Along with Canadians of Lebanese origin, they create a living bond between our two countries. In this regard, I am thinking particularly of the

tireless efforts of Mr. Abdul Majid Haddad and the Association of Canadian University Graduates in Lebanon.

The ties between our two countries go far beyond personal relationships - Canada and Lebanon share even more. Both of our countries are members of la Francophonie. We know that a common language and cultural heritage favour mutual understanding. We share the same values of freedom of expression and the exchange of ideas. Both of our countries are market economies, and thus we fully understand the importance of international trade.

I am thus joined today by a large delegation of business people, led by my colleague, Mac Harb. Among them, I would like to draw your attention to Mr. Georges Menassas, former Trade Commissioner at the Canadian embassy in Beirut. This is Canada's sixth trade delegation to Lebanon since the election of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's government in 1993.

The presence of this delegation shows how deeply Canadian businesses are committed to the Lebanese market. Indeed, one of the key objectives of my visit is to promote trade relations between our two countries.

Canada's trade with Lebanon has grown by leaps and bounds since the end of the war, largely thanks to the enthusiasm of Lebanese-Canadian entrepreneurs and the pioneering efforts of the Canada-Lebanon Chamber of Commerce.

The reconstruction effort, which we cannot help seeing around us, offers Canadian companies unique opportunities to make use of their skills and international experience in the form of joint ventures and other types of partnership with Lebanon's private sector.

Once peace is restored in the Middle East, Lebanon will offer investors from Canada and other Western countries a unique gateway to the region. I think that Lebanon has an excellent chance of resuming its role as one of the region's major financial centres.

What does reopening our embassy mean? First of all, the embassy will provide immediate assistance and first-hand information to Canadian companies seeking to do business here. The embassy will also enable Canada to strengthen its dialogue with Lebanon on a number of political issues, notably our common quest for peace in the Middle East. As well, it goes without saying that consular and immigration services will be greatly improved. Reopening this embassy is an illustration of the importance that Canada attaches to its privileged relationship with Lebanon, and of the confidence we have toward this country and its future.

In addition to greeting Ambassador McNee, I would like to introduce our next resident ambassador, Mr. Daniel Marchand, as well as Mr. Denis Létourneau, who will be our chargé d'affaires until Mr. Marchand's arrival.

In closing, I would like to thank Mr. William Zard, the owner of this magnificent building, for his ready co-operation.

I wish to welcome you all as our first visitors, and I am proud to inaugurate the Canadian Embassy to Lebanon.

Thank you.