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THE HOSTAGE SITUATION IN IRAN -- FURTHER CANADIAN ACTION

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mark Macguigan, today tabled in the House of Commons a Bill, an Act to Enable the Government to Prescribe Regulations Imposing Certain Economic Sanctions Against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Jointly with Herbert Gray, Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, the Secretary of State for External Affairs also announced that controls were being placed, effective immediately, through the Export and Import Permits Act, on the export of goods to Iran.

The measures provided for in the draft legislation follow the more limited measures with respect to Iran announced on April 23. They also fulfil the undertaking given in that statement that if there were no progress in solving the hostage crisis by May 17, Canada would, in concert with others, implement further measures. The Bill tabled today is intended as enabling legislation that will put the Government in a position to implement the range of measures from the draft Security Council Resolution of January 10, which the Government, in concert with EEC governments and other countries, has decided is appropriate to the circumstances.

In putting forward this legislation, the Secretary of State for External Affairs emphasized that these new measures are in no way meant to indicate hostility toward the Iranian Government and people, with whom Canada wishes to have friendly relations. Rather their purpose is to underline that breaches of international law of the magnitude of the hostage-taking in Iran inevitably erode co-operative links between the country perpetrating that breach and the rest of the international community. They are also meant to indicate Canada's concern about the humanitarian aspects of detaining persons in this way for so long.

The action under the Export and Import Permits Act in line with the draft Security Council Resolution of January 10 and the actions of like-minded countries, provides that export permits will normally be denied except for the shipment of food, medicine, medical supplies, other humanitarian goods and certain personal items. Export permit applications for any shipments to Iran will need to be made to the Office of Special Import Policy of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

The Government will be closely following developments in the hostage crisis in the hope that the election of a new Parliament and the appointment of a new Government in Iran will facilitate the release of the hostages. Once the hostages are released, the Government will act to remove the restrictions imposed by the measures in the legislation and by the implementation of export controls against Iran.