

# Statement

Minister for  
International  
Trade



# Déclaration

Ministre du  
Commerce  
extérieur

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**NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY  
THE MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND  
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,  
THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL H. WILSON,  
TO THE DUBAI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**DUBAI  
May 8, 1991**

Affaires extérieures et  
Commerce extérieur Canada

External Affairs and  
International Trade Canada

Canada

Dubai is my last stop before returning home after an intensive series of visits and meetings with some of Canada's most important trading partners in this region. It is appropriate that my visit conclude here, the commercial gateway to the Gulf, a market of immense potential and great achievement. It is my hope that the promising future which lies ahead for your society will also be mirrored in a flourishing relationship between Canada and Dubai.

As some of you know, I assumed my responsibilities as Minister for International Trade only recently, having been Minister of Finance for over six and a half years. My new duties are different but the overall purpose is similar. Being competitive abroad means being prosperous at home and being competitive at home means being successful abroad. Trade is the lifeblood of a modern economy. And the Middle East is a region of renewed trade opportunities for Canada. That is why it is so appropriate that my first visit abroad as Minister for International Trade be to this area.

My conversations with leaders from government and business throughout the region have confirmed this assessment and made me even more certain that a new partnership for prosperity is possible for Canada and this region, one which Canada must and will pursue with vigour.

Upon my return, I intend to inform the Canadian Cabinet of the opportunities and the challenges which lie ahead.

Many Canadians have tended to regard the Middle East as a place of mystery or a source of energy. But the reality and the opportunity is much more than that. Between 1985 and 1990, Canadian exports to the Middle East region more than doubled, reaching a level of \$1.6 billion. The nature of that trade is diversifying, moving beyond agricultural goods and manufactured products to include a broad range of services in the engineering, oil and gas, education, health care, energy and transportation sectors. Our relationship has become more mature with that diversification, and our countries have grown closer, developing more intimate personal links and ties to this region.

Dubai and the United Arab Emirates are no exception to this trend. Your remarkable economic growth has opened up new opportunities for us both. Between 1986 and 1990, our two-way trade grew from \$26 million to over \$87 million, an increase of more than three-fold. Much of this has resulted from increased Canadian energy imports. But Canadian exports to the Emirates have also increased substantially. In 1989 alone, Canadian exports to your country went up by 40 per cent. The nature of that trade ranged from grains to industrial goods and a broad range of services. Many of the companies that have contributed to that growth are here today and it is our hope that our meetings will lead to further opportunities for an expanding and mutually beneficial relationship.

I have brought with me some of the best and the brightest in Canadian industry. They are world leaders in many fields, world-class achievers with a history of intense involvement and interest in Dubai and your region. Their strengths are Canada's strengths. They are at the leading edge of Canadian industry in a variety of sectors: telecommunications, transportation, energy, education, agriculture, financial services, engineering and mining. There are significant opportunities for working together. It is a partnership I believe we must pursue.

That involves getting to know your needs and priorities. It involves forming strategic alliances and joint ventures, utilizing your advantages and ours in a common quest for success. It also involves the development of trust and confidence, something which I believe already exists and which can be strengthened still further by this visit and future contacts.

The Canadian presence in Dubai is already substantial. There are almost 500 Canadians here working in many fields from education to engineering, health care to banking. That demonstrates the trust they have -- a trust we share -- in the tremendous potential of Dubai and our commercial relationship with you. In addition, there are some 100 students from the United Arab Emirates in Canada, training as doctors and engineers, lawyers and managers. That too is a relationship we value. It enhances your appreciation and understanding of Canada and it also increases our knowledge of your country and culture, whose achievements are so many. We look forward to a continued expansion in the number of your citizens visiting Canada.

Many of you will be aware that Canada was forced to close its Embassy in the Emirates in 1987. That was a painful decision for us, one which paralleled others we had to take elsewhere. It was a measure required by our need to reduce government expenditures in order to bring our deficit under control. Controlling and reducing that deficit and the government expenditures which contribute to it has been a priority of our government. It makes Canada a stronger economy, a more attractive place to invest, a more promising partner for trade. We are succeeding in that task.

We attempted to compensate for the closure of that Embassy by ensuring regular and intensive coverage by our post in Kuwait. I believe that has worked well. But I also believe that now is the time to move forward with a more active trade presence here, in Dubai.

I am pleased that with the initiative of our private sector, we are able to announce the opening of a Canada Trade Centre in Dubai. It will be operated by the Canada-Arab Business Council. The Chairman of the Canada-Arab Business Council, Mr. Lambert

Toupin, is here with me today as is the Director of the Canada Trade Centre, Mr. Dale Carl.

The trade centre will be a vital link for the Canadian private sector in their dealings with their counterparts in Dubai. It will facilitate contacts, ensure follow-up, assist in the selection of agents and improve our understanding of the local market. I encourage all of you to utilize this resource to its fullest.

The partnership we have established with the Canada-Arab Business Council is unique. Their members include some of the most important leaders of Canadian industry with intense interest in your region.

Through the support we are able to offer the Council, missions are mounted to the region, meetings and seminars are held in Canada and important consultation and liaison is maintained in Canada between the private sector and the government. This is a partnership that works well, one that I am sure the Canada Trade Centre here will enhance even further.

As we look to the future, I believe three areas should be the focus of our efforts. First, there is a great potential for Canadian participation in the development of Dubai itself. Already, Canadians play an active role here. While the export of barley and wheat continues to be an important part of our relationship, new areas of growth, particularly in the service sector, have been notable. Educansult has been responsible for the development of the entire system of Colleges of Higher Technology in the United Arab Emirates, including Dubai.

CANSULT has supervised the reclamation of approximately 10,000 hectares of land. Standard Aero has an ongoing contract for the maintenance of helicopter engines for the government. Companies such as Scimitar at Dugas and International Petroleum Consultants, who are independent drillers, are participating in your vibrant petroleum sector.

And Canadian experts in environmental clean-up and monitoring will participate in your Environmental Conference in September.

The Royal Bank of Canada has operated here for a good many years and others such as NORR Associates and UMA have opened or are planning to open offices as well. And Canadians are involved in the financial, health care, education, transportation and energy sectors in the Emirates. There is great potential for growth in these and other areas.

Second, Dubai's unique position and potential as a gateway to the Gulf can be an important element in our future relationship. The broad range of banking, trading and commercial enterprises which

exist here are a resource that Canadian companies now recognize as a key to success throughout this region.

Third, partnerships between companies from Canada and Dubai would be valuable in participating in the reconstruction of Kuwait. Canada has many assets which suit that task: the Government of Kuwait has stated it will involve Canada closely in the reconstruction effort and the Canadian government has taken a variety of steps to bring together companies with the resources and advantages Kuwait needs. Given Dubai's status as a regional trading and commercial centre, I believe this is an area where we can prosper together.

Building on that potential is the purpose of my visit. I believe both our countries would benefit by even more intensive contacts in the future. Public and private sector visits in both directions build trust and confidence and allow both of us to develop greater awareness of each other's needs and capacities.

You may be assured that my government will work to intensify these contacts both in Canada and through the Canada Trade Centre here.

The crisis through which this region has recently passed has had far-reaching implications. We in Canada recognized the nature of the threat posed by the invasion of Kuwait, and responded in a way that demonstrated the importance we attach to the security and sovereignty of the states of the Gulf region. That is why, on August 23, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney ordered the despatch of three naval vessels, the *Athabasca*, the *Terra Nova* and the *Protecteur*, to help respond to the threat posed.

Those vessels played a full part in the implementation of sanctions, just as the squadron of CF-18 aircraft, based in Qatar, played a full part in the air.

Most of those units have returned to Canada, but the fact that the Canadian government has decided to send a replacement, HMCS *Huron*, which we visited yesterday, is firm evidence of our continued concern for the situation in this region, and our desire to promote our relations with the member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council. I could also point to Canada's involvement in environmental clean-up and monitoring in Bahrain and Qatar, in that respect.

Canada's contribution has also taken the form of demolition experts, who helped with the clearance of Iraqi-laid mine fields in Kuwait. They continue in that capacity today, under the UN banner. Indeed, Canada is providing the largest United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) contingent, in keeping with our long-standing tradition of United Nations peacekeeping.

The Gulf crisis brought Canada closer to our friends in this region. That crisis was a period of great challenge. We now have before us a period of great opportunity -- an opportunity to build a new type of coalition, one for peace and prosperity for our two countries.

On behalf of the delegation of Canadians with me here today, I wish to thank you for your hospitality. I want to encourage you to pursue with them the many opportunities for mutual advantage that exist. Canada regards Dubai as an important partner in this region. I can assure you that we will pursue that partnership with sincerity, commitment and vigour.