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JAPAN DESIGNATES CANADIAN LAB TO TEST BUILDING PRODUCTS

Minister for International Trade Roy MacLaren and Industry Minister John Manley today welcomed the decision by the Japanese Ministry of Construction to select Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada (ULC) as the first foreign laboratory designated to fire-test construction materials for the Japanese market.

The certification of ULC - a Scarborough, Ontario, company - flows from the Joint Announcement on Co-operation on Building Product Standards, signed by Mr. Manley and Japan's Minister of Construction Koken Nosaka on October 31, 1994. The announcement involved mutual recognition of building product standards.

The mutual recognition initiative's objectives are to eliminate duplication of testing, evaluation or certification procedures, to increase the availability in Japan of quality building materials from Canada, and to promote more efficient construction practices.

"Easing technical barriers should stimulate exports of Canadian building products to Japan," Mr. MacLaren said. "That will yield benefits to both Canada and Japan."

"This is a significant step for the Canadian building products industry," said Mr. Manley. "Canadian companies may now get faster, less costly approval for their products if they pass tests conducted by ULC in Canada."

Under this initiative, qualified Canadian testing laboratories can approach the Japanese Ministry of Construction to designate them as official Foreign Testing Organizations. ULC is the first to be chosen after Japan's Building Research Institute determined that ULC was fully capable of carrying out fire tests of certain building products in accordance with Japanese standards.



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ULC is a not-for-profit organization, accredited for testing, certification, and standards development. ULC's services are predominantly in areas related to life, fire and property hazards and security.

The Japanese building code requires that building products used on the exterior of houses must meet high standards for inflammability. Until the certification of ULC, testing of Canadian building products had to be carried out in Japan, making costs too high for many small and medium-sized Canadian firms.

Along with the certification program, Canada and Japan are discussing other initiatives on deregulation and building standards which could lead to greater access for Canadian building products to the Japanese market.

Canada sells about \$3 billion annually in building materials to Japan, making these products Canada's single largest export to that country. Finished building material exports are growing rapidly as North American-style finishing and design gain in popularity.

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For further information, media representatives may contact:

Media Relations Office
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
(613) 995-1874

Murray Hardie
Industry Canada
(613) 954-3037