

Statement

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
TO THE ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES
AND COLLEGES OF CANADA**

**OTTAWA, Ontario
March 15, 1995**



Government
of Canada

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Mr. Lajeunesse, ladies and gentlemen, guests:

Let me thank the AUCC [Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada] and its members for their cordial invitation. For some time I have wanted to meet with you and to take stock of the international dimension of higher education. I would also like to share with you a few comments on our foreign policy review. A good number of you testified before the Special Joint Committee. Your comments were greatly appreciated by the Committee and the Government. If you will allow me, I shall begin by situating the role of the universities and colleges in our new foreign policy. I would then like to examine together the possibilities of co-operation that exist between the Government and Canada's universities and colleges. I would be pleased to answer your questions afterward.

Last month, I presented in the House of Commons the Government's response to the recommendations of the Joint Committee along with our new Foreign Policy Statement. *Canada in the World* emphasizes the importance of our special position in the international arena and the opportunities it generates for Canadians. The Statement recognizes that economic, political and social change has accelerated since the end of the Cold War and that we must adapt in order to face the challenges this presents. While recognizing that our actions are limited by the current financial situation, the Government has set three main objectives to guide the choices that must be made against this background of constant change:

- 1) The promotion of prosperity and employment;
- 2) The protection of our security in a stable world environment;
- 3) The projection of Canadian values and culture.

These objectives are clearly interdependent and complementary. I think that Canada's universities and colleges play a unique role. In fact, you are helping to achieve each one of these three objectives. You are training our future labour force, our future entrepreneurs. You are helping to build bridges between people to construct a better world. You are helping to project our identity abroad and to disseminate our values throughout the world. Not many can boast of having such an influence toward achieving these three objectives. Thus the Government sees you as an important partner in its international activities.

We have already taken steps to introduce the new directions contained in the Statement, and you will be interested to know that a new Global Issues and International Cultural Affairs Branch has been created within my department. From now on, International Cultural Relations will be under the responsibility of an assistant deputy minister.

This decision shows the importance that our government places on helping your sector to get our country poised favourably for the new knowledge-based world economy. The Government Statement

recognizes that Canada's international competitiveness rests in large part on how well our next generation of workers can obtain the knowledge, talents and tools required to operate effectively in an increasingly competitive international labour market.

Clearly the international dimension of higher education in Canada must be strengthened for our country to face with vitality the challenges - both human and technological - of the world economy. Thus, we must work together to enable our students to acquire training that is international in scope.

My colleague Lloyd Axworthy, the Minister of Human Resources Development, and I have authorized people in our two departments to engage in negotiations with the European Union, the United States and Mexico to establish two new programs of co-operation in higher education and training. Of course, these programs will involve the universities and colleges. The negotiations are well under way, and we hope to be able to reach an agreement by year's end.

Despite these efforts, I know that our country's investment in international academic relations does not compare with those of our competitors. However, as I said in the House during the tabling of our Foreign Policy Statement last month, a lack of resources is no excuse for abdicating our responsibilities. I asked my department to do everything it could to consolidate the Government's present resources in order to obtain the critical mass required to develop coherent strategies. In addition, I have asked my department to integrate science and technology fully in its international academic relations. Thus we shall reinforce our country's ability to penetrate the international markets and to create the strategic alliances required for the expansion of the scientific community right here in Canada.

I would like to see a greater degree of co-operation among the university community, the private sector and the Government in order to achieve our objectives. The Fulbright program, a program of educational exchanges between Canada and the United States, is a good example of what this type of partnership can achieve.

We must go beyond the traditional question of how we can use the appropriations given to us. More and more, we must find ways of generating revenue. You are well placed to know that there is a great demand internationally for our educational goods and services. The new International Cultural Affairs Bureau will have a division responsible for promoting exports of these Canadian goods and services abroad. This new division will work with you to establish strategies and help you to conquer the international markets. As you know, the Department has already announced its intention to create Canadian Education Centres in Asia with this in mind.

Canada is known for its programs of teaching English and French as second languages. France, Britain and the United States have successfully marketed such programs. Why haven't we? There are tremendous profits to be realized in this - profits that could be used to finance other programs in education and international cultural relations.

The members of the AUCC are all aware of the need to attract a larger number of foreign students. This is a financial imperative for some of you. The presence of foreign students in Canada has important economic spinoffs for our economy. You are facing heavy competition from U.S. institutions, for example. Yet we don't take a back seat to anyone in this regard. Our institutions and programs are among the world's best. Our quality of life is certainly attractive to a good number of foreign students. Our tuition fees are fully competitive. Are there enough foreign students in Canada? Surely not. I think that the time has come to devise a strategy to promote Canada's universities and colleges abroad. However, I would like to be clear on one point: the universities must not enter into strong competition with one another to attract foreign students. A common front must be adopted. The whole country, and not just a few particular institutions, must be the beneficiary.

Canadian universities and colleges are also trusted partners in development. I was pleased to learn that the well-established partnership between the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], the AUCC, and the universities and colleges has been reconfirmed recently with the renewal of the Educational Institutions Program in CIDA's Partnership Branch.

Universities possess the skills and know-how needed to contribute to sustainable development. Universities are concerned with the promotion of Canadian values and they are ardent defenders of human rights, social equity and good governance. Universities, in their constant effort toward internationalization, provide ideal opportunities for young Canadians to learn about and get involved in development co-operation.

Our Foreign Policy Statement recognizes the need to involve more Canadians in this field. It also recognizes the need to increase awareness among Canadians of the accomplishments and merits of international co-operation. I trust we can count on the close co-operation of universities and colleges in this regard.

I know that the AUCC wishes to gain access to CIDA's new Open Bidding System. I am pleased to note that preliminary discussions have taken place. We will hold formal consultations in the months ahead and I am confident that we will arrive at some type of understanding soon.

The AUCC is a trusted partner of the Government and I fully intend to continue our unique collaboration. I am pleased to announce today a \$10-million extension to the University Linkage Program with China, with the AUCC as the executing agency. I am also pleased to announce that the consortium formed by the AUCC and the Association of Community Colleges of Canada [ACCC] has been selected as the executing agency for a human resources development program in Tunisia worth \$15 million.

These are hard times for governments and universities. We have all had very difficult decisions to make. I want to ensure you that universities and colleges continue to be our partners. You have a unique role to play in the development and conduct of our foreign and aid policies. We must look even closer at sharing our resources, at pooling our energies, at helping each other achieve our goals. We can't afford to disperse ourselves. We must devise common strategies. We must diversify our partnerships.

I think that our new Foreign Policy Statement gives us the opportunity to do just that.

Thank you.