

# *Statement*

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY  
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
TO THE  
FORUM ÉCONOMIQUE DE LA RÉGION DE QUÉBEC**

**QUEBEC CITY, Quebec  
February 15, 1995**



Government  
of Canada

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Mr. Mayor, Mr. Lavoie, ladies and gentlemen:

It was with great pleasure that I accepted your invitation. The federal government is proud to be associated with a group as dynamic and innovative as yours. I am pleased to note that the Forum économique de la région de Québec has about 400 participants from 25 different economic sectors. The Chambre de commerce et d'industrie du Québec métropolitain indeed is well aware that for regional development to be successful, the largest possible number of players must be brought together.

In this regard, the federal government has always played a facilitating role for regional development - a role of support for development projects throughout the province of Quebec, but of course also in the greater Quebec City region. You are in a position to know that the regional development concept has changed over the years. Thus, certain factors explain the repositioning of the Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec [FORD-Q] and are leading us, as a government, to review our approach to regional development.

The global economy is now fully integrated. Geographical distance, an issue long at the heart of the regional development debate, is no longer a negative factor. Trade globalization is therefore forcing us to change the traditional view of regional development and to integrate it into the broader framework of a barrier-free market.

The developing countries are rapidly becoming serious competitors in certain areas. The global market's balance of economic powers is changing.

The new global economy will be knowledge-based. Successful economic development now depends on technological innovation, training and ideas.

In this context, the Federal Office's strategic renewal aims at a single major objective: helping our regional entrepreneurs attain their full development potential in the context of the new global economy.

This direction is based on two simple facts: for more than 15 years SMEs [small and medium-sized enterprises], have created, in Quebec and in Canada as a whole, about 80 per cent of new jobs each year. Furthermore, in order to survive and prosper, SMEs must latch on to the globalization of markets.

Last March, FORD-Q accordingly moved to target its initiatives more specifically on the development of SMEs and to direct its interventions to certain active niches: technological innovation, development of markets, implementation of projects to stimulate regional development and support for entrepreneurship.

Our country's prosperity and growth depend on our ability to innovate. Forum participants are well aware that the future economic growth of Quebec and Canada is tied to our ability to innovate and make use of leading-edge technology. The Quebec City area has been taking definite steps in this direction for a number of years. The federal government is proud to have participated in the establishment, in this region, of research institutions in various scientific fields, including the Institut des biomatériaux du Québec, the Institut de recherche du Centre hospitalier de l'Université Laval, and the Institut de recherche de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, not to mention Forintek. The Quebec City area thus has a critical mass of research specialists that is envied internationally. Over the years, the greater Quebec City region has earned a reputation as a major focus of research and development. The federal government's presence in the Quebec City area has led to beneficial economic spinoffs.

In the area of market development, the Government of Canada's goal is to provide entrepreneurs with the tools they need to succeed in a new global context. The establishment of the new World Trade Organization, the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] and interprovincial trade agreements have opened up new opportunities and challenges that require us to adapt. We must seek urgently to develop markets for our companies. FORD-Q has been given a mandate to deliver the federal government's export support programs to the entire province of Quebec. Last May, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Industry Canada and FORD-Q signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote and increase access to federal government programs and services in the area of international market development. We must identify new markets, but we must also prepare, inform and support our companies through programs and services drawing on the international network of the federal government and its partners.

The Government of Jean Chrétien has set itself a priority task: to stimulate economic growth and employment. International trade is the key to our prosperity. The Prime Minister's trade missions to Asia and Latin America, which were crowned with success, clearly demonstrate our determination. In this regard, the federal government has an important role to play in this regard. It can open doors to businesses, it can break down certain barriers, and it can use its influence and resources to help our companies conquer markets. In short, it is leading a fantastic team - Team Canada.

The new Foreign Policy Statement unveiled by my colleague the Honourable Roy MacLaren, the Minister for International Trade, and me last week is designed to support our efforts to stimulate growth and create jobs in Canada. This new policy will serve the interests of SMEs across Canada. It recognizes their key role in the growth of our economy.

In future years, we must spare no effort to promote the partnership between all economic stakeholders.

We have also begun to take steps in this direction with our partners in the Quebec government and business community. For example, the Centre Info-Entrepreneurs, an information centre for business people, has been opened in Montreal. This centre brings together not only 20 or so federal government departments under the leadership of FORD-Q, but also the Quebec Ministry of Industry, Trade, Science and Technology, and especially the Metropolitan Montreal Chamber of Commerce.

The establishment of the Centre Info-Entrepreneurs is more than a symbolic gesture. It typifies the kind of partnership we must establish in the future. It also affords undeniable proof that such co-operative initiatives are quite feasible and cost-effective for our clients. Herein lies the key to our collective future.

In addition, the federal government has renewed its commitment to respond to the growing demand for this type of services centre in its action plan entitled, *Building a More Innovative Economy*. We plan to increase our investment in such centres by \$15 million yearly. We also plan to involve host organizations such as chambers of commerce and economic councils to an even greater extent.

Another example of federal-provincial-municipal partnership is the Canada-Quebec Infrastructure Program, ratified on February 7, 1994. After one year's operation, we can say "mission accomplished." Indeed, nearly 1600 projects have been registered under this program throughout Quebec. These projects will generate investments of \$1.66 billion and will help to create 21 000 job-years in Quebec. Over the next 12 months, the partnership will continue to help stimulate the economy of all the regions of Quebec.

Finally, right here in the Quebec City region, a partnership between the federal government, the Quebec government, the Société des établissements de plein-air du Quebec, the Quebec Urban Community, the City of Beauport and Hydro-Quebec has made the development project for Montmorency Falls Park a reality. This is another example of the complementarity that the Government of Canada is striving to develop with the Government of Quebec, the private sector and local stakeholders in order to carry out viable projects through which to accelerate Quebec's economic development. In all these cases, the federal government is an active, committed partner seeking to help further Quebec's prosperity.

However, we must realize that there are still obstacles to entering into beneficial partnerships. Not the least of these is overlapping or duplication between organizations.

The federal government has made known its position on this matter a number of times during the past 15 months. Our position can be summarized as follows: let efficiency and co-operation take the place of empty talk and duplication. It is our job to both streamline and improve the operation of programs and services. If there are cumbersome elements in the system, they will be done away with. We are determined to pursue this course in the coming months and years. We plan to increase greatly the initiatives for co-operation and harmonization.

In closing, let me say that the federal government intends to continue its efforts to create a prosperous economic and fiscal climate to promote the vitality of SMEs. My colleague the Honourable Paul Martin, Minister of Finance, is committed to promoting SME development, as his budget will show.

Let me again thank you for your kind invitation. Our course of action is completely in line with the current economic necessities and the needs of our regional economies. I am convinced that our approach is opening up some very stimulating prospects for the Quebec City region: let's take advantage of them together!

Thank you.