



communiqué

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL TRADE MINISTERS CONFERENCE

The following statement was delivered in Ottawa on Monday, June 21, 1982, by the Honourable Ed Lumley, Minister of State (International Trade), at the opening of the Federal-Provincial Conference of Ministers responsible for international trade.

"I am delighted to have this opportunity to meet with Ministers and senior officials responsible for international trade from all over the country. I appreciate and welcome your positive response to my invitation.

A number of reasons have lead me to call this meeting today. I thought it would be appropriate for Ministers responsible for trade from all Canadian provinces to meet together, particularly since this is the first time that a federal-provincial conference devoted exclusively to trade issues has been held. More importantly, however, I thought such a meeting at this time was necessary, given the developments which are taking place on both the domestic and the international scene.

We are all seized with the importance of international trade for Canada and of the role it can play in the revitalization of the Canadian economy. We are also aware of the constraints which the present economic situation has placed on international trade. In the current economic climate, there is a need more than ever for governments to support private sectors' export initiatives, in a mutually complementary way.

On the international scene, we are right now in the middle of an important year for action on trade questions. Trade issues have been central to most recent international discussions. At the OECD Ministerial meeting which I attended at the beginning of May and at the Trade Discussions with the USA, the European Community and Japan which followed, participants recognized the dangers of increasing protectionist pressure. They reiterated their commitment to the open and multilateral trading system and agreed on the need to find common ground on the manner in which trade issues should be dealt with. At the recent Versailles Summit, leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the multilateral trading system, as embodied in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and to maintaining its effective operation.

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Next November, in Geneva, will be held the first meeting of the GATT, at ministerial level, since 1973. This is a major international trade event which we have to prepare for and to the success of which Canada should attach the highest priority.

In my travels since taking on this portfolio nearly three years ago, I have seen Canadians successfully export to all parts of the world. My visits to countries in Asia, Latin America, the South Pacific, Africa and the Middle East in particular have convinced me that extensive opportunities for many Canadian products exist in these regions, and we need to ensure that our companies are internationally competitive in pursuing these markets.

I am anxious to review these developments with you and obtain your views."