

Minister of Industry,
Science and Technology and
Minister for International Trade



Ministre de l'Industrie, des
Sciences et de la Technologie et
ministre du Commerce extérieur

Statement

Déclaration

92/38

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL WILSON

MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND

MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

HANOI, Vietnam
September 8, 1992

Minister, Ambassador Perron, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure this evening to be able to return some of the warm and cordial hospitality that has been extended to me and to the members of this Canadian trade delegation.

I know the members of the Canadian delegation will join me in expressing our sincere gratitude for a highly successful stay in your country. We have had a wide-ranging exchange of views on many subjects, and we have examined ways to expand and improve our trade relations.

Over the past two days, I have had the pleasure of meeting Prime Minister His Excellency Mr. Kiet along with the distinguished Minister for Trade and Tourism, Minister Triet, Foreign Affairs Minister Cam, Energy Minister Hai and Transport, Communications and Post Minister Luu. As well, I have met representatives of a number of state organizations including State Planning Council Chairman Mr. San, the State Committee for Co-operation and Investment Chairman Dr. Xuan, Governor of State Bank Mr. Khiem and Petro Vietnam Chairman Mr. Thoang.

I am grateful to them all for making themselves available in such a busy period.

Over the course of our discussions, I have been impressed by the commitment of your government and people to the policies of economic reform and constructive engagement with nations of the region and the world. Canada strongly supports these policies, and an expanded role for Vietnam in world affairs. You have made strides in promoting economic development and your progress is most impressive. The course you are pursuing is not always an easy one. It will require considerable time and effort to rebuild and put in place a new infrastructure and to provide the legal, financial and institutional framework that will support and encourage development. However, I have no doubt that the efforts will reap great benefits for your country.

Canada's uninterrupted relations with Vietnam go back to 1973. Following the resolution of the Cambodian peace process, we are now taking concrete steps to enhance this relationship.

A number of recent events have illustrated this. Last July, we opened the Canadian diplomatic office in Vietnam and appointed our first charge d'affaires. In June, we had the first consultations of our senior officials. We also announced at that time our intent to resume a modest bilateral aid program for Vietnam.

On the trade side, over the past two years there have been a number of visits exchanged between our two countries. In April this year, we sponsored our first federal trade mission to participate in the Telecomp '92 Show in Hanoi. Additionally,

there have been business missions from some of our provinces (Alberta, Quebec and British Columbia) to Vietnam.

I would like to reiterate this evening that the Canadian government attaches much significance to expanding commercial and economic co-operation between our two countries. Though modest, bilateral trade has grown steadily over the past two years. Canada's total investment in Vietnam is already substantial, amounting to over \$115 million at the end of 1991. But the potential for co-operation is even greater.

An important dimension of our trade relations is the 140,000 Vietnamese Canadians. They have demonstrated significant entrepreneurial capabilities in Canada, and some are already playing an important role in our bilateral trade by becoming an important link between Canada and Vietnam.

During this visit, I have been struck by the challenges Vietnam faces in developing new infrastructures, and the steps being taken by the government to re-integrate its economy with the global economy. I found an extremely positive attitude toward joint ventures and foreign investment. At the same time, I have noticed significant complementarity between Canadian expertise and Vietnam's economic development priorities.

The Canadian economy has, to a large degree, been shaped by its geography, climate and people. Our vast mass of territory has required us to develop expertise, and indeed to excel in areas that are also important to Vietnam, namely agriculture, transportation, telecommunications, oil and gas, hydroelectric power and banking services.

Members of my trade mission are senior executives of Canadian companies that specialize in high-technology manufacturing and provide services in these sectors. Many of them have devoted considerable effort and resources to explore and develop collaborative projects in Vietnam. I am confident that this interest will lead to mutually beneficial commercial opportunities in the not too distant future.

From the Canadian government side, to assist Canadian companies in exploring joint venture opportunities, we have provided tools to facilitate bilateral and economic co-operation.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), through its industrial co-operation program, has made considerable investments in assisting Canadian companies carry out joint feasibility studies on infrastructural projects in Vietnam's priority sectors.

Currently, there are more than 25 major feasibility studies that have been undertaken by Canadian firms in areas ranging from

telecommunications to highway development, oil and gas recovery and refinery development options to airport development. We hope that more Canadian companies will make use of the program to examine collaborative opportunities in Vietnam.

I have talked for some time about the fine prospects for our bilateral relations. Before closing, let me put this in the context of wider Canadian trade goals.

Canada is pursuing trade initiatives in several areas at once. A successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations is our top priority. We know that it is in our interest, given our considerable dependence on foreign markets, to work toward a strengthened world trading system and wider liberalization.

Another concurrent priority has been the trilateral North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) talks with our neighbours, the United States and Mexico. Canadian goals in the talks were met. We have an arrangement that is consistent with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It achieves further liberalization of barriers between our three countries without raising new barriers to other partners, and we feel it will make the North American economy more competitive.

The media, and indeed government spokespersons in many Asian countries, have displayed some concerns about the NAFTA negotiations by consistently referring to the process in terms of a "trade bloc." This misrepresents NAFTA, as the new arrangement continues to allow the three members to maintain existing trade regimes with their other trade partners.

Canada will continue to work to strengthen our ties with the countries of the Asia Pacific region.

Tomorrow, I am leaving for Bangkok to attend the fourth ministerial meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum. Canada is one of its founding members. APEC can serve as a constructive force for international trade in improving the links among the member countries, as well as opening up the international trading system by building a stronger, rule-based trading regime for the Pacific.

As Vietnam opens its economy to the world and ties between our two countries steadily expand, I know the Canadian public will pay increasing attention to Vietnam's political system and institutions. We hope Vietnam will continue to make progress on democratic development and improvements in human rights.

I am certain that by furthering the process of reform and integrating its economy more closely with the global one, Vietnam

will multiply its economic and commercial linkages, creating the opportunity to become a major trading centre in the Pacific Basin community.

What are the future prospects for Canada-Vietnam commercial and economic relations? I believe that they are excellent, as our commercial and economic relations progress on the basis of mutual trust and common interest.

The candid exchanges of views I have had with the distinguished government representatives and officials here were highly valuable, not only for me, but for all the members of my delegation. It is my belief that this mission will provide the necessary momentum for the continued growth of our economic and commercial relationship.