

For Immediate Release

Senior Executives to Submit Free Trade Plan to Canada and European Union governments

Montreal, October 29, 2002 – A group of prominent Canadian executives will gather today to develop an action plan for a Canada-European Union (EU) free trade agreement at a meeting of the Canada-Europe Roundtable for Business (CERT).

The event will deliver recommendations directed at the Canadian government and European Commission that highlight areas where economic policy can be enhanced to generate a more competitive Canada-EU business environment.

“It is clearly in Canada’s interest to boost its trade and investment performance with all its trading partners and Europe is no exception,” said the Hon. Roy MacLaren, Canadian Chair of CERT and former Canadian Minister of International Trade. “We strongly believe that it is critical for Canada to develop a free-trade agreement with the European Union. We will be gathering today to discuss how to make this a reality,” Mr. MacLaren said.

Over the past 40 years, Canada’s share of exports to the EU has declined from 45% to less than 5%. Currently, over 85 % of Canadian exports are to the United States. With the introduction of the Euro single currency in 2001 to serve a market of over 300 million consumers, the EU presents an excellent opportunity for Canadian exporters to diversify abroad.

Mr. MacLaren and Baron Paul De Keersmaecker, European Chair of CERT and former Chairman of the Board of Interbrew, will reiterate their call for the establishment of a Canada-EU free-trade agreement during the day long meeting of business leaders and government officials at Club St-Denis, in Montreal.

Editors Notes

Participants in the CEO Roundtable meeting include:

- The Hon. Perrin Beatty, President and CEO, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, who will speak on trade diversification;
- Leonard J Edwards, Deputy Minister for International Trade, will speak about international trade and innovation;
- Other speakers include: Avrim Lazar, President and CEO of the Forest Product Association of Canada, Daniel Gagnier, Senior Vice President, Corporate and External Affairs, Alcan Inc. and Yves Bériault, Senior Partner, McCarthy Tétrault, LLP; and Robert Keyes, Senior Vice President, Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

Speakers at the event and subsequent discussions will cover areas including market access, environment, innovation, competition policy and technical barriers to trade.

Recommendations based on these discussions will be submitted in December during the Canada-EU summit in Ottawa.

CERT was formed in 1999 by a number of large companies to articulate the interests and concerns of businesses that operate between Canada and the EU. Among its members are Alcan, Interbrew-Labatt, Tractebel, the Canadian Pulp & Paper Association, Novartis, GPC International, Bombardier, and Power Corporation.

CERT members firmly believe that a cooperative Canada-EU relationship can provide Canadian business with a stronger voice on matters of trade and investment and provide a balance in Canada to the overwhelming presence of the U.S. on the economy.

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