

**Speech From Baron Paul de Keersmaecker, Chairman of CERT
Brussels, 16 June, 1999**

Inaugural Meeting of the Canada Europe Round Table

It is with great honour that I am able to speak this evening to a group of influential members of the European and Canadian business and political community, such as yourselves. This evening, on the eve of the Canada / EU Summit, we are gathered here to mark the establishment of the Canada-Europe Round Table or CERT. CERT was created by leading Canadian and European businesses and has been strongly supported by the Canadian Mission and the European Commission. Among these are my own company, Interbrew, as well as others such as Aerospatiale, Alcan Aluminium, Daimler Chrysler, GPC Government Policy Consultants, Nortel Networks, Novartis, Seagram, Solvay and Tractebel.

Canadian and European businesses have always needed more than formalised agreements promising to "strengthen ties" and "foster links". Both the EU and Canadian governments have recognised this and as part of the Joint Action Plan, a new EU-Canada Trade Initiative (ECTI) was launched last year. Building on the trade aspects of the Joint Action Plan, the ECTI will help to identify the best ways for strengthening bilateral trade co-operation, especially in the fields of cultural co-operation and business to business contacts.

The founding of CERT, therefore, is very timely as the importance of a strong relationship between Canada and Europe is essential in today's world. While Europe continues uniting itself throughout the economic and political domains, Canada is enjoying a period of economic prosperity and stability.

The impetus behind CERT was to establish a formal dialogue between these two trading partners. As a matter of fact, it was you yourself, Sir Leon who highlighted the importance for a targeted EU-Canada business dialogue at a speech earlier this year in London. CERT has now picked up that challenge and is running with it! By co-ordinating the efforts of business leaders in Canada and Europe, the Round Table hopes to bring a new level of communication between European and Canadian businesses and their respective governments. By focusing on the mutual goals of the members of the group, the Round Table will, in effect, work to promote their interests.

Among the speakers you will be hearing from this evening are distinguished members of both the political and business worlds in Canada and Europe. Symon Visser is a Senior Adviser at Nortel Networks, a leading Canadian telecommunications firm. He is a group leader for one of the CERT issue groups, which concentrated on issues related to trade, market access, the WTO and tariffs and will be presenting the main points of his group's position paper. Dr. Max Kaufmann is the Director for European Affairs at Novartis International, a global leader in the life sciences. He led the second CERT issue group, which focussed on intellectual property rights, biotechnology and agrifood and he will be presenting the main points of his group's position paper.

Later, our two guests of honour will present their views on the maturation of our relationship from their perspective. The Honourable Sergio Marchi, the Canadian Minister for International Trade, will present Canada's views on the establishment of the Canada Europe Round Table. Sir Leon Brittan, Vice President of the European Commission, who will outline

the European perspective, will follow Minister Marchi.

After our speakers, there will be the opportunity for you to question any of them concerning the issues surrounding the Canada Europe Round Table or Canadian-European Trade Relations. Georges De Veirman, who is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the American European Community Association, will lead the question and answer session.

Now I would like you to welcome our first speaker, Symon Visser of Nortel Networks .[...]

Concluding remarks

This evening truly marks the beginning of a new channel of communication between these two great trading partners. The Canada Europe Round Table promises to be an effective and useful forum for its European and Canadian members. But this new forum will require the co-operation of many groups with multiple interests. However, without the uniting of these groups and their goals, we would not have an important voice in Canada and Europe. I believe, however, that the Canada Europe Round Table will be able to achieve just that.