**Remarks: 33rd German-Canadian Conference**

**Atlantik-Brücke**

**The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne**

**Minister of International Trade**

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(14 minutes)

Thank you for that nice introduction.

I’m delighted with the invitation to join you here this evening. I also want to thank everyone for taking part in this conference.

Every time I visit Europe I feel like it’s a homecoming for me since I lived and worked here for several years before entering Canadian politics.

I know, first hand, about many of the strong ties that Canada shares with member states of the EU – that is especially true for Germany.

Canada’s strong ties with Germany go back a long way.

In fact, you don’t have to travel far in Canada to come across a town or city that bears traces of proud German ancestry.

From Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, to Steinbach, Manitoba, our country is dotted with towns that bear the marks of German migration to Canada.

Over the years, these people-to-people links have blossomed into close relations on many levels. German contributions to Canadian history, culture, politics and our economy have been enormous.

And today we share many values as well as a long partnership on the world stage – as this conference has underlined for the last 33 years.

Canadians and Germans value democracy and the rule of law.

We support and embrace open borders and open societies. We understand the importance of international cooperation and partnership.

And we share a progressive vision of the world, realizing the immense potential that comes when we recognize that diversity is strength.

And that diversity and openness is a competitive advantage too.

That brings me to our shared perspective on trade, and to the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, which I know has been a big focus of your discussions.

When we came into government, we saw a global political landscape largely in retreat from the world fueled by resentment that opening up to the world has not provided individuals with real dividends.

That opened the door to populist movements and to poisonous rhetoric about the value of trade.

That said, it also put a mirror up to the way trade was traditionally conducted and challenged us to think differently and to address its genuine failings.

We know we can’t do trade the same way we did 20 years ago.

We need to think about trade and investment as ways to improve people’s lives, rather than simply mechanisms to help improve a company’s bottom line.

Trade and investment are first and foremost about people.

And people are our greatest assets. Our diversity is an economic strength because of them. Our attractiveness to the world’s best talent is because they see themselves building a life here.

That is the fundamental premise of Canada’s progressive trade agenda: openness, diversity and empowerment leads to more people engaged in trade and more job creation at home.

Progressive trade isn’t just the right thing to do, it just makes economic sense.

Trade needs to be inclusive. What does inclusive mean? It means we need to make trade real for people. People need to feel that their voices are being heard – that they will benefit from agreements.

We must be laser-focused on making trade real for people by ensuring our focus puts the middle class front and centre - whether it’s more and better jobs, higher wages, lower prices, or more choices for consumers.

Put simply, we do not have to sacrifice our values and higher aspirations for a better, more prosperous and more just society.

Trade does not have to be a race to bottom. On the contrary, with CETA and now the CPTPP, we have shown that with hard work, it can be the opposite: a march to the top!

That is one reason we made sure that CETA contained strong safeguards for consumer, worker and environmental protection – to name a few.

CETA is a model for the rest of the world – and one we think other countries will quickly embrace when they see the benefits of conducting trade in a progressive way.

In fact, we saw that on our Pacific shores just last week when we announced the revised and new CPTPP.

Progressive is in the title that has real meaning: enforceable labour and environment chapters, the right for states to regulate in their own interests, firm commitments to openness, diversity and respect and tariffs plummeting at the same time.

With CETA on the Atlantic and CPTPP on the Pacific, we have shown hard work can pay off for more people. Soon Canada will have preferential access to nearly 2 billion consumers in the most lucrative, dynamic and fastest-growing regions on earth.

That was worth the longer effort to get it right.

As I mentioned at the start, many are starting to realize that progressive trade is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do.

Here in Europe, we are making progress at turning the tide towards trade and to the advantage of CETA: eight EU Member States having now ratified CETA at the national level.

It will help to raise us all up, including small- and medium-sized enterprises, women, youth, and indigenous peoples.

We need to fix that. Canada’s progressive trade agenda is about ensuring that the jobs, growth and prosperity generated by the global trading system are sustainable, inclusive and widely shared.

Progressive trade is the principal way all of us can work together to strengthen and further develop the international rules-based trading system.

I believe that CETA can and will be a model for modern trade agreements.

I also believe, as your agenda indicates, that there is a future for the North American Free Trade Agreement.

We’re working very hard to modernize NAFTA, so that it remains the great deal it has been for the last 24 years.

We have just completed round six of negotiations in Montreal, Quebec.

Our objective is to build on the valuable components of an already good agreement.

We must update NAFTA to include new realities in trade and investment.

Canada strongly believes that a modernized NAFTA should include stronger labour and environmental provisions and new chapters on trade and gender, as well as trade and Indigenous peoples.

In all these negotiations, Canada has come to the table with goodwill and constructive ideas. We want to work with our NAFTA partners to find solutions that benefit everyone.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening.

I know you have spoken a lot about trade over the course of this conference.

I want to make sure that focus is on delivering results for more people and making the paper we sign actionable and real.

Let’s get CETA over the line in every single EU country so that we can do more together, build together and innovate together for tomorrow’s economy.

In that spirit, I am delighted that several Canadian companies will be visiting Berlin at the end of February as part of an “Industry 4.0 mission”, including an Industry 4.0 partnering event and site visits to German companies, demonstration facilities, and clusters.[[1]](#footnote-1)

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Bavarian Research Alliance and the National Research Council for the memorandum of understanding which they signed yesterday.

This is great news for everyone, and our government looks forward to working with our strong German partners in the months and years ahead, as we continue to find ways to make the world a better place.

Thank you. Danke-shoon. Merci.

1. <https://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/about/global/proposals/canada_germany_industry.html>

(Industry 4.0 is part of the German-Canadian Conference Agenda this year. ) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)