

European Community



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BACKGROUND NOTE

EC MAKES "TOKYO ROUND" CONCESSIONS FOR CANADA'S FISH

Canada Urged To Be Generous With Quotas

Canada should be able to export more fish and fish products to the European Community, following concessions made by the EC in the GATT "Tokyo Round" of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, Johannes Van Rij, First Secretary (Commercial) of the EC Commission Delegation, told a Halifax audience on 24 April.

At the same time, he said, the EC could provide Canada with considerable expertise in operating fleets and processing catches on board. Mr. Van Rij thought Canada could be generous in sharing its fishing surplus with other countries, particularly those in the EC.

Extracts from Mr. Van Rij's address follow:

"Let's look for a moment at the sector of fish and fish products, which is of such importance to the Atlantic region of Canada and to Nova Scotia in particular. About a third of the total landed value of Canadian sea-fish is produced right here in this province, and some 80 per cent of the fish products of this province are destined for export.

"In the GATT negotiations the European Community made tariff concessions, in different forms, for products like salmon, lobster and frozen fillets of ground fish; more details will become available later, but in any case, our concessions should increase the potential for Canadian exports to EC markets. I think this meets one of the main preoccupations of Canadian negotiators in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations and certainly one that is clearly felt in Atlantic Canada.

"Access to our markets is, of course, not only a matter of import duties and non-tariff barriers. It is at least as much a matter of marketing expertise and this is something that apparently can still be improved if Canadian exporters want to have an increased share of the EC market.

"In general fish is appreciated in Europe mostly for its own sake and not for its value as protein or as a substitute for chicken. Already, Europe is the second biggest customer in the world for Canadian fish and the potential of its markets is enormous, if one knows how to recognize its specific needs and how to cope with them. This will require considerable efforts on the part of Canadian exporters and might have to lead to close cooperation with European partners who traditionally have been in the business of selling fish products in the Common Market.

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"But there is more to the story than selling fish. Before selling it, you need to catch it, and there we in the European Community have some interests and some expertise. We have considerable expertise in fleet operation and in modern catching and on-board processing technologies, if only because our fishermen have traditionally been further out on the world's oceans than Canadian fishermen have. On the other side, you have the enormous and still increasing resources of the Canadian 200-mile zone, a lot of which you will not be able to catch without a bigger fleet, and without the use of new technologies. I know that there are different views as to the dimensions of this additional capacity, but I think we all agree that at least some new input is necessary. Where will this capacity come from? Where will the technology and expertise come from? Where will the investment capital come from? Will European industries be able and willing to participate? These are all important questions that require attentive consideration.

"In this context, another question comes to mind concerning our interests: as long as some of the resources in the Canadian economic zone are not used by Canadian fishermen, who will be allowed to participate in the catch of the surplus? Will we be able to use here some of our surplus capacity in catching equipment? And how will the surplus be defined? The Canadian definition of surplus is not necessarily shared by its partners. Canada risks very little in this area by being generous with fishing quotas for other countries and, in particular, for its friends in the EC. Canada will be able to establish fishing rights for European vessels in Canadian waters on an annual basis, which will allow you to take into account any changes in the development of stocks and in the capacity of the Canadian fishing fleet, and to adapt your quota accordingly.

"We should be able to face these problems together as the partners we are in many ways, and with the confidence that comes between close friends. Both Canada and the European Community are parties to the multilateral North Atlantic Fisheries Agreement (the so-called NAFO), and have recognized mutual interests in that context. We also have an interim bilateral fisheries agreement and we are willing and eager to negotiate a more permanent agreement. We have our mutual commitments in GATT. We both recognize the complementary interests of our private industries and their willingness to cooperate. Beyond that, we have our privileged relationship in the Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Cooperation of 1976 between Canada and the European Community, which is the expression in the language of lawyers and diplomats of our common commitment to cooperate in all areas of commercial and economic interest on the basis of mutual benefit. This agreement translates our common concern to recognize and to promote our common interests and the close links between Canada and Europe.

"In the sector I have just described, we have an area where, in the spirit of the Canada-EC Framework Agreement, we could and should bring together our complementary interests and our common aspirations in order to work out optimal solutions for the benefit of our economies, industries and citizens".
