



March 25, 2021

Mr. Sven Spengemann, P.C., M.P.
Chair
Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Spengemann:

On behalf of the Government of Canada, we would like to thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE) for its report entitled, *Good Friday Accord*. We are pleased to receive the committee's report and would like to thank all members for dedicating their time and effort to ensuring recognition of the close ties that Canada has with the people of Ireland and the United Kingdom, and to reiterating Canada's unwavering commitment to support and maintain the integrity of the Good Friday Agreement, including in the context of the U.K.'s exit from the EU.

Canada and Ireland enjoy close bilateral relations founded on strong people-to-people ties, shared democratic political traditions, and a mutually beneficial commercial relationship. More than 4.6 million Canadians claim Irish ancestry. Canada and the U.K. also have long historical people-to-people ties, as over 10 million Canadians claim British ancestry. The relationship between our two countries continues a long tradition of strategic partnership.

We are proud that individual Canadians played important formal and informal roles in facilitating the negotiation and implementation of The Good Friday Agreement over many years. Most notably, Retired General John de Chastelain played a prominent role between 1995 and 2011. After serving as a member of the International Body on the decommissioning of arms in Northern Ireland in 1995, Retired General John de Chastelain was one of three independent chairmen (with former U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and former Finnish Prime Minister Harri Holkeri), invited to chair the peace talks among the Northern Irish parties, and the U.K. and Irish Governments, that led to the Good Friday Agreement. Retired General de Chastelain also chaired an international body to monitor the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons - the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning. The Canadian Forces also maintained "Operation Invitation", in which they supported the decommissioning process including via provision of ordinance expertise, until 2010.

Many other Canadians played important roles in the peace process, including Justice William Hoyt, a former Chief Justice of New Brunswick, Justice Peter Cory, formerly of Canada's Supreme Court, University of Toronto's Professor Clifford Shearling, and many Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers who served in the multi-national Police Oversight Commission.

Global Affairs Canada continues to ensure that, in bilateral discussions with the U.K. and Irish governments, Canadian representatives take every opportunity to stress our ongoing support to the Northern Ireland peace process, at the highest levels.

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As mentioned in the committee's Report, "The decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union could affect the Good Friday Agreement and the provisions in it regarding the border between the Republic of Ireland and the U.K." The EU-U.K. Brexit Agreement (Withdrawal Agreement) of October 2019 includes a Northern Ireland Protocol. This Protocol is designed to prevent any hardening of the border on the island of Ireland between Northern Ireland and the Republic, in recognition of the intertwined nature of the societies on both sides and of the contribution that seamless movement of goods, services and people across that border has made to the peace process as agreed to in the Good Friday Agreement.

On December 8, 2020, the EU and U.K. announced they had reached an agreement on the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the Protocol entered into force on January 1, 2021. The U.K. and the EU also reached an agreement on December 24, 2020, on their future relationship - the U.K.-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (U.K.-EU TCA). Given these outcomes, both the EU and the U.K. have stated that this delivers on their objective to protect the Good Friday Agreement, and maintain peace and stability on the island of Ireland.

The new relationship between the U.K. and the EU entails important new regulatory and customs requirements. The implementation of these types of new requirements will be particularly sensitive in relation to Northern Ireland given the on-going fragility of the Northern Ireland peace process and the complex arrangements that have been agreed to avoid a hard land border on the island. Canada, along the EU and other international partners interested in maintaining peace in Northern Ireland will continue to closely monitor the situation post-Brexit.

In response to the committee's call to ensure that any post-Brexit trade deal between Canada and the United Kingdom be consistent with the principles of the Good Friday Agreement, we can assure members that the nature of trade agreements and the subject matter of the Good Friday Agreement means that there is no need to have any intersection between these agreements, and this absence of overlap takes away the need to make such a commitment. Further, since the Republic of Ireland is a Member State of the European Union and Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, the U.K. and the EU will be responsible for ensuring that the principles of the Good Friday Agreement are protected, including through the implementation of the U.K.-EU trade agreement.

Once again, on behalf of the Government of Canada, we would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for their diligence and commitment to our relationship with the close allies that are Ireland and the United Kingdom, and to the principles of the Good Friday Agreement.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Mary Ng, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion
and International Trade



The Honourable Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs