

Speech: Liam Fox speech to the Toronto Board of Trade

It is a pleasure to be returning to Canada, and to visit your country for the first time in my new capacity as the Secretary of State for International Trade.

I am delighted to be the first UK Cabinet Minister to visit during your celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Confederation. I doubt I'll be the last.

I would like to thank Jan De Silva, the Toronto Board of Trade and your sponsors for hosting us today.

It is a privilege to be able to address you all at such an exciting moment in the United Kingdom's history.

As Secretary of State for International Trade, I am currently heading up a department that has been called the greatest start-up in the history of British government.

Six months ago, the department existed only on paper yet now, we boast thousands of staff across the globe, and we are still growing.

Until last year, the world's fifth largest economy had no department dedicated to international trade and commerce exclusively.

But the June referendum on the UK's membership of the EU delivered a golden opportunity for the United Kingdom to recast our place in the world.

For the first time in more than four decades, Britain will have an independent trade policy.

Britain's ambition is to become a global champion of free trade, working to remove barriers and liberalise commerce across the world.

The Prime Minister has made a clear statement on our relationship with EU: enabling the UK to strike comprehensive trade agreements with other countries, and allowing us to remove unnecessary barriers where they restrict our ability to trade.

And part of this process, while we remain a member, will be a continuing of our commitment to promote free trade from within the European Union.

This means unwavering support for the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

The signing of CETA at the end of last year was a great moment for global free trade, coming as it does at a time when a chorus of protectionism is rising across the world.

It was a particular moment of pride for the United Kingdom, and for many in our government and public services who have worked tirelessly for years to ensure its smooth passage.

I congratulate my colleague, Chrystia Freeland, and her predecessors, for getting the deal done, and I look forward to working with Francois-Philippe Champagne and seeing him tomorrow in Montreal. I met with Chrystia this morning and there are few politicians working on trade with whom I have such a shared mind.

CETA is worth around £1.3bn a year to the UK, and some \$12bn to Canada.

And we have every intention of continuing to honour its clauses as the United Kingdom opens a new chapter in its history.

Continuity will be the cornerstone of our future negotiations with the EU.

The European Union currently has 36 free trade agreements with other countries around the world.

Ensuring that there is no disruption of our free trade with Canada, or any other partner, is a top priority for my department.

We will also seek, as far as possible, to replicate the EU trading schedules as we take our independent seat in the WTO, maintaining current tariff levels with a view to seeking further liberalisation over time.

Finally, we will seek an ambitious free trade agreement with the European Union, maintaining the greatest possible access to the single market.

We seek a new, strategic partnership with our European neighbours based on free trade and mutual cooperation. We want to see a strong and successful EU as a political, economic and security partner.

But if we are to champion free and open trade, the United Kingdom must re-forged our relationships with those nations who have been our longest serving and closest allies.

The UK and Canada enjoy a friendship built not only on our history, but upon economic partnership and, above all, shared values.

As much as Canada is a part of Britain's past, and vice-versa, we are also part of one another's future.

We share a unique degree of cooperation in almost every area of international relations.

We are members of, the G7, the G20, the Commonwealth, the Five Eyes intelligence network and NATO.

We are both champions of free trade who understand that it is the best means to reduce global poverty and increase global prosperity.

It is a friendship that is stronger than ever, and one that has formed the foundation of a fruitful commercial and economic partnership.

The United Kingdom is Canada's third-largest export market, and your second-largest destination for foreign direct investment after the US.

In turn, Canadians buy £6.3bn worth of British goods and services annually.

Around 600 UK firms operate in this country, in industries from oil extraction to aerospace to pharmaceuticals.

Many of them are based here in Toronto, at the heart of the UK-Canada business relationship in sectors ranging from financial services to food and drink.

As Britain looks to the future, it is partnerships such as ours that will be the most highly valued, that will be a foundation to our prosperity, and will help the United Kingdom to shape a new place in the world.

Of course, I cannot come here as a representative of your second-largest investment partner, without making reference to your first, the United States.

The UK is as committed to free and open trade with the US as we are with Canada.

The three-way trading and investment alliance between Canada, the UK and the USA is vitally important not only to our own prosperity, but to the stability of the free trading world.

Our government has been greatly encouraged by the attitude of the new administration towards UK-American free trade, and Britain will continue to be a champion and advocate for free trade, working to remove barriers wherever they are found.

For that is our ambition.

When the Prime Minister took office in July, she did so with the promise to make the UK a global leader in free trade once more.

For more than a century, this country was the greatest trading power in the world.

Britain and free trade were virtually synonymous.

Once again, we renew our commitment to free and open trade.

At a time when protectionism once again threatens our economic freedoms, and growth in world trade is slowing to a crawl, Britain will stand in defence of free trade, working with partners and allies, like Canada, to remove barriers and tariffs wherever they are found.

Yet to do so, we must first use these principles to forge our own place at

the heart of global commerce.

There is a big, wide world for Britain to do business with, and we intend to do just that.

And, as of this week, it is easier than ever for companies in Canada and around the world to connect and do business with British firms.

We have launched two major global campaigns; Invest in GREAT Britain and the International Trade Campaign.

Britain is a global hub of exceptional businesses and investment opportunities, and since the referendum we have attracted a record £16bn of foreign direct investment; a vote of confidence in the future of the UK.

In a globalised world, the United Kingdom must stand ready to trade with every partner, to build a free and open network of commerce and trust that will not only safeguard our nation's prosperity, but spread wealth across the world.

Two hundred years ago, Napoleon called Britain a 'nation of shopkeepers'.

Since then, we have worn his insult as a badge of honour.

It encapsulates our country's commercial character, our drive to sell our goods and services from Los Angeles to Lahore, St. John's to Vancouver and everywhere in between.

Trade has always been the lifeblood of the United Kingdom, and it will remain so.

And with Canada, one of our closest of allies, by our side at this historic time, there is no ambition we cannot fulfil, and no challenge we cannot rise to meet.

Rationing of this kind is totally unacceptable and is against the best traditions of the NHS – Julie Cooper

Julie

Cooper MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister, commenting on reports of increases in waiting times for hip operations, said:

"It

is absolutely shocking in 21st Century Britain that patients in some parts of the country will only qualify for knee and hip replacement operations on the

NHS if they can prove pain so exceptional that it prevents sleep.

“Rationing of this kind is totally unacceptable and is against the best traditions of the NHS. However, there are concerns that if the Government continues to deny sufficient funding to the NHS, rationing of treatments could become more widespread.”

[News story: The UK continues to be Scotland's largest market for trade.](#)

[Scottish exports](#) to the rest of the UK in 2015 (excluding oil and gas) are estimated at £49.8 billion, an increase of £2.1 billion (4.4%) over the year. This is good news not only for Scottish businesses large and small, but also for employment, for product and service development and economic stability.

Scottish exports to the rest of the UK

Scottish exports to the rest of the UK in 2015 (excluding oil and gas) are estimated at £49.8 billion, an increase of £2.1 billion (4.4%) over the year. This was driven by an increase in the export of utilities (electricity, gas, water etc). The rest of the UK continues to be Scotland's largest export market as the figure is £21.1 billion higher than the estimated total for international exports.

Scotland's exports to the rest of the UK are 4 times greater than those to the EU.

Exports to countries within the European Union (EU)

International exports to countries within the European Union (EU) were estimated at £12.3 billion, which is 43% of total international exports. This is an increase of £520 million from the previous year (4.4%). The increase was driven by an increase in the export of petroleum and chemical products.

Within the EU, the Netherlands (£2.3 billion) was again, the largest market, followed by France (£1.8 billion) and Germany (£1.8 billion). Whilst the Netherlands is consistently reported as one of Scotland's top trading partners, a number of goods exported here are likely to be destined for onward supply to other countries. This is because of key ports in this area.

International exports to non-EU countries

International exports to non-EU countries were estimated at £16.4 billion, which is 57% of total international exports. This is an increase of £485

million from the previous year (3.0%).

Service sector exports from Scotland are of greater importance to the rest of the UK than internationally as more than half (55%) of the rest of the UK exports are services compared to 38% of international exports.

Total international and rest of the UK exports in 2015 (excluding oil and gas) are estimated at £78.6 billion, up £3.1 billion (4.1%) in the year. Exports to the rest of the UK accounted for 63% of this total, EU exports accounted for 16% and non-EU exports 21%.

The USA continues to be Scotland's top international trading partner (£4.6 billion). The top 5 international export markets (USA, Netherlands, France, Germany and Norway) accounted for £11.7 billion (41%) of international exports from Scotland.

Scotland's success in trading

Over the last ten years, findings from the Global Connection Survey have reinforced the strong trading performance that Scotland has enjoyed within the UK.

[See the full results of the Global Connections Survey here.](#)

[Press release: New report offers guidance to support disabled students](#)

The Department for Education has today (27 January 2017) published a new [report](#) which provides best practice guidance to help universities, colleges and independent higher education providers support their disabled students.

It will help to ensure that all higher education providers are best equipped to support disabled students to reach their full potential and succeed. It encourages providers to look at how they can support and offer the best possible environment for disabled students to pursue their studies.

The report has been produced by the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, which is a new sector-led group, supported by the Department for Education, and chaired by Professor Geoff Layer, Vice Chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton.

The group is comprised of senior representatives from higher education as well as educational sector groups and was created in order to share best practice and reflect on how providers can best cater for disabled students.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson said

I welcome this guidance from the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, and would like to thank members of the group for their work. The guidance will support all higher education providers in expanding their inclusive teaching and learning practice, bringing benefit to them and their students.

This group is an excellent example of how the higher education sector can work together for the benefit of all students, supporting this government's social mobility agenda – giving everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, the chance to study at higher levels of education.

The National Union of Students, who are also members of the group, have produced a [survey format for providers to collect their own student feedback](#). This will enable them to gather information about the challenges their students' face in accessing their higher education course, and inform their approach to reducing barriers within their organisation. It will be issued alongside the report.

Professor Geoff Layer, Vice Chancellor University of Wolverhampton led on the development of this guidance. He said:

Higher education has the power to transform lives, providing skills, experiences and opportunities that leave an indelible positive impression. However, we know that a student's experience can be adversely affected if they have a disability and do not receive the right support to enable them to reach their full potential.

The Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group was set up to build on the work and good practice in place across our universities to support our disabled students to succeed. By addressing equality issues and adopting inclusive teaching practices, universities can recognise and value the diversity of the student body and work with them to enhance the learning experience for all.

This report complements the [Teaching Excellence Framework](#) (TEF), which will put a renewed focus on teaching quality and encourage providers ensure that students from all backgrounds, including disabled students are able to get the most of their university experience.

Higher education institutions should also review learning, teaching and assessment approaches to identify and address inclusion and equality issues. There should be a renewed focus on learners and staff with disabilities to ensure that any concerns they have are being listened to and addressed.

1. Read the [inclusive teaching and learning in higher education report](#).

2. [National Union of Students survey format](#) for providers to collect their own student feedback.
3. The membership of the Disabled Student Support Leadership Group:

Organisation represented	Member
Chair	Geoff Layer, University of Wolverhampton
Higher Education Funding Council for England	Sarah Howls
Higher Education Academy	Pauline Hanesworth
Equality Challenge Unit	Chris Brill
National Union of Students	James Elliott
	John Conway, Royal Agricultural University
	Jo Cooke, De Montfort University
HE institution representation	Mark O'Hara, Birmingham City University
	Sue Rigby, University of Lincoln
	Richard Reece, University of Manchester
Scottish HE representation	Sheila Williams, University of Edinburgh
Health Education England	Emma Wilton
AMOSSHE	Ben Bailey
Universities UK	Fiona Waye
GuildHE	Kate Wicklow
Association of Colleges	Arti Saraswat
Independent Higher Education	Pete Whittard
Office for Disability Issues	Katherine Toomey (nominee)
Association of Heads of University Administration	Mark Ellul
Department for Education	Matt Toombs, Georgina Watts, Paul Higgs (Secretariat)

[New vehicle tax rules moves DVLA in to the world of webinar](#)

From 1 April 2017, the way vehicle tax is calculated is changing for new cars and some motorhomes. These changes will only apply to cars registered with DVLA on or after 1 April 2017. We've been working closely with stakeholders over the past 12 months to make sure that in the run up to this, they're aware of the changes and know what, if anything, they need to do to prepare.

Key stakeholders for the new vehicle tax rules are fleet companies. Traditionally, we tend to speak face to face with this customer base, but this can be time consuming and costly for either side when travelling to meetings. So, we asked our fleet customers what the preferred way of communicating with them would be – the consensus was that a ‘webinar’ would work. We’d trialled a new webinar kit recently, so we were looking for an opportunity to use it for the first time. With our fleet customers keen, this was an exciting opportunity to put our new kit into practice!

Two trials later and we were ready to go live. We sent a link to all who expressed an interest and at 10.30am on 10 January we were ready to broadcast.

In total, 195 participants joined the webinar to watch the presentation and listen to the commentary provided by Helen Jones and Rhian Townsend, two of our more experienced Service Designers.



Behind the scenes (in a room not far away!), colleagues were waiting to answer questions as they came through. We were poised with laptops at the ready to answer all that we could. An hour later, presentation over and all questions answered, the webinar was done.

Feedback we’ve had since suggests that it went down really well. So it’s an excellent example of how sharing ideas and working together with our stakeholders helps us meet their needs. Well worth it.

It also shows that our investment in the webinar kit is well worth having and in future we’ll be putting it to good use for other audiences too.

If you weren’t able to make it on the day you can see the presentation and the questions that were asked during the webinar [here](#)

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