

It's a great pleasure to be here to help celebrate Canada's Export Award winners. There is a lot of work to do in building a renewed, more prosperous and united Canada -- it is good to look around and see so many strong shoulders to help carry the load.

As a nation, we are considering some dramatic new approaches for Shaping Canada's Future Together. These proposals are aimed at resolving some longstanding constitutional dilemmas, while also building the basis for a more effective economic union. Canada needs your participation for this bold new undertaking to succeed.

One of the reasons we are here is to celebrate success. Later this evening this year's Canada Export Award winners will be announced, and their names will be added to a distinguished roster of previous winners. All have won their spurs in the global marketplace -- no easy arena in the fiercely competitive new era of globalization.

But in a winner-take-all world, good is no longer good enough. Too much is at stake to be in any way complacent about declining competitiveness. After all, one out of four jobs in Canada depends on competing successfully in export markets.

For all the importance of trade to our national well-being, less than 100 of Canada's 30,000 exporting firms account for over half of our sales abroad. Only 32 per cent of manufacturers export in the first place. Clearly, more firms need to do their share in the vital task of creating employment at home by cracking the markets of the world. I hope that the Canada Export Award winners help to inspire more firms to look outward for future growth.

For example, the composition of world trade has shifted. Manufactured products grew from 45 per cent of total world trade in 1980 to 57 per cent by 1989. Yet, in Canada, manufacturing accounts for only 40 per cent of exports, and much of this is concentrated in the auto sector. Our exports of finished goods and services are increasing. However, while we rank eighth in exports of goods, in the fastest growing sector in the industrialized world -- services -- we are only twelfth in exports. And fully 42 per cent of Canadian exports are still raw, or minimally refined, materials. This still leaves us vulnerable to commodity price swings.

Traditional exporting techniques are increasingly being challenged by technology, rapidly changing markets and shortened product cycles. Competitiveness today is based on innovation, intensive use of knowledge, unrelenting attention to quality and a strong international orientation. In the face of these trends, and our low ranking in terms of future and outward orientation, it is evident that we have a major challenge to overcome.