

For all of us, the further challenge is to adapt the changing methods and evolving markets.

As Minister of Trade, I consider you of the exporting community my first responsibility. Tonight I pledge my continuing efforts to the creating of the circumstances in which export business can best flourish.

We want the general public to understand both the importance of exports to our economy, and what we are calling the export/import equation, that is to say, if we want those imported goods which enhance our comfort and quality of life we must export to generate the earnings required to buy them. These are the key messages we want to get across during Canada Export Trade Month.

The presentation of the First Canada Export Awards by the government is the highlight of activities planned for this month. The presentation of these awards will become an annual event. I hope that the success of the firms we are honouring tonight will encourage others to enter the export arena and, for those already involved in exporting, to serve as an example of what can be achieved.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Export Trade Development Board and its Chairman, Roger Hatch, for bringing to our attention the need to publicly honour successful Canadian exporters. Their initiative and guidance were instrumental in bringing the Canada Export Award to fruition.

I would also like to thank the Award Selection Committee consisting of Jake Warren, Liisa Nichol, Keith Hendrick, Albert Deschamps, Claude Charland and Tom Burns, who even with their wealth and diversity of international trade experience, faced quite a challenge. Choosing 15 from the field of over 250 well qualified and deserving applicants I am sure was not an easy task. All of the firms showed very strong export performances.

For example, the annual growth rate of export sales of these companies over the past three years averaged 54 percent. Similarly their export sales averaged 70 percent of total sales in 1982. By any measure these firms have to be considered top notch exporters.