

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Reg, for your warm introduction. I have been looking forward to this opportunity to spend some time exchanging views with Association members.

Like Frank Petrie, I like this kind of informal get-together and so I intend to keep my remarks quite short. However, there are a few issues I would like to bring to your attention, including many of the points Reg has already mentioned.

As everyone here knows, trade has been at the centre of public attention over the past year. As Trade Minister, it has been a tough but rewarding year for me. We have made real progress in implementing our two-track policy of trade liberalization. First, we have reached an historic agreement with our American trading partners, and, second, we are actively working for trade liberalization in the multilateral negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Now, as 1988 begins, I want to turn more attention to what Reg has called the "bread and butter issues" of trade development. I'd like to say more about that in a few moments.

First, let me return briefly to the Canada-U.S. Trade Agreement. While the job of drafting the Agreement is done, the job of informing Canadians about it is still in progress. That is a job the Government cannot do without your help.

Opponents of free trade are wasting no time in spreading misinformation across the country. Their position is marked by the presence of emotional outbursts and the absence of rational arguments. Organizations like the Canadian Exporters' Association can help set the record straight. Your voice of reason is needed. Your involvement is crucial.

As Prime Minister Mulroney told this Association last October, "I ask you to join with us in transforming the success of negotiations into a victory for all Canada".

Let me focus for a moment on one particular issue in the free trade debate -- adjustment. Unfortunately, Canadians tend to