

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, this continent was discovered by Europeans trying to find their way to Asia. This country was opened by fur traders and explorers working their way to the Pacific. The Act which made us a transcontinental nation was the building of a railway to connect the rest of this country to the Pacific. So our attraction to Asia and the Pacific began before our country did, and each year it becomes more important. We are honoured to host the Fifth Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference here, to consider ways we can continue to grow together.

I extend a particular welcome to those Committees who are attending this Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference as full participants for the first time. Your participation is striking evidence of the growing tide of interest and involvement in Pacific Economic Cooperation.

We hope all of you will find some time to see Vancouver while you are here. We are naturally proud of the beauty and dynamism of this city, but also of how well she reflects the cosmopolitan nature of this country. All of you would find in Vancouver strong traces of the cultures you come from, and so you would in other parts of Canada. We are one of the most international of countries. Our people come from everywhere and our policies reach out to everywhere, in trade, in development, in investment, in our refugee programmes, and in the travel and teaching and traditions of our citizens.

Increasingly, we turn more of our attention to our relations across and around the Pacific Ocean. In October, in the Speech from the Throne, Her Excellency, the Governor General of Canada, set out the Government's agenda for the next year. She underlined the special emphasis we place on broadening our economic and trade relations with the other nations of the Pacific.

We recognize, as national policy, that our future prosperity is tied to the Pacific. Look at the unparalleled economic vitality of the region. Over half of the world's Gross National Product is generated by nations of the Pacific. Canada's stake is clear. Two years ago, our Pacific trade surpassed our trade across the Atlantic. Japan, China, Korea and Australia are all among our top ten customers. Our trade with the members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations has tripled over the last decade. More business and government missions are visiting the region than ever before.