

I'm going to start out by making a statement that is so obvious -- and yet of such blinding truth -- that you will probably be shocked by it; few nations in the world are as dependent on international trade as is Canada.

Truism? Old saw? Of course. But saws become old only because of long use, and truisms, basically, are repeated truths. The fact is that out of every dollar we earn in Canada, 30 cents come from exports. Three million jobs in Canada depend directly on trade -- and the figure would be higher if our trade performance were better, because every billion dollars in exports translates into nearly 16,000 jobs. To put it very simply, if we in Canada could not trade outside of Canada, our standard of living would be severely reduced, and our way of life would be far different than it is and has been.

But there are growing threats to our trade. One of the most obvious ones, the traditional one, is protectionism, which is alive and well and living in every country, certainly including Canada.