

Message from the Minister for International Trade

It is with pleasure that I present, on behalf of my Team Canada Inc partners, the third annual Report to Parliament on the achievements of Canada's International Business Development program. This has been a particularly successful year. Canadian business continued to turn in a strong export performance despite a year of nail-biting turbulence in the global marketplace. In 1998, Canadian exports grew by 7.4 percent to \$368.9 billion, a new record and a much better than expected performance.

Meanwhile, our trade promotion partnership — Team Canada Inc — continues to grow. Over the past year Team Canada Inc has expanded from the three original core departments to include 20 Government of Canada departments and agencies. In partnership with the provinces and territories, Team Canada Inc provides single-window access to the federal government's international business development services and programs.

This means the Government of Canada is better positioned than ever to offer comprehensive trade and investment development programs and services to more Canadian companies. We're making it easier for companies, particularly small and medium-sized companies, to access everything from training and counselling to market intelligence and export financing. Through the partnership, we can be more strategic — making federal dollars go further to help more Canadian companies become successful exporters.

No other major economy is as trade-oriented as Canada. Today, over 40 percent of our gross domestic product depends on export trade, more than any other G-7 nation. That's why Canada has so much at stake in the pursuit of a stable, rules-based international trading system. While we made progress in 1998, we must continue to push aggressively for fair and predictable rules where right, not might, determines the playing field upon which our exporters compete. And as more markets become accessible, we need to work even harder domestically to ensure that our companies are taking advantage of these opportunities.

In the end, the most important measure of our trade success is job creation. Our unemployment rate is currently at its lowest level since 1990. Last year's employment growth was the best so far this decade, with 449 000 net new jobs. More than 1.4 million net new jobs have been created since 1993.

Canada's export growth is not only helping to generate many of these jobs, it's playing a major role in fostering knowledge-intensive, high-wage jobs — the jobs of the future. In the year ahead we will continue to press for trade and investment expansion, focussing on the markets and the sectors that offer the best prospects for the best jobs for all Canadians.

Hon. Sergio Marchi
Minister for International Trade