

Normally, a Canadian trade minister would begin by describing the historic relationship between Canada and the United States – the world's longest undefended border, the largest bilateral trade relationship, etc., etc.: the usual warmed-over clichés.

I neither need nor want to do that, for three reasons: first, you know that our bilateral relationship is much more complex than can be embraced in a few clichés; second, I want you to remain awake; and third, there are much more important things to talk about.

I shall spend a moment, however, to mention the warm, ongoing relationship that Boston has with Canada – especially with our Atlantic region and with Quebec.

Boston has for so long had close ties with Canada that in Atlantic Canada, New England is still known as the "Boston States." It is a region that is vital to the health of the Atlantic Canadian economy. Everything from gypsum to microchips is traded between us, and our banks and insurance companies feel very much at home.

New England represents an important market for Quebec. Quebec's exports to New England amounted to almost US\$4.4 billion in 1994, covering a spectrum from telecommunications equipment to electricity.

Quebec is also an important export market for New England, representing US\$1.3 billion in 1994 in everything from semi-conductors to aircraft engines.

Nationally, New England is a growing market: in 1994, Canada increased its exports to New England by 13 per cent to US\$6.6 billion – three times the value of our total exports to "Old England" – and further increased our investment. Meanwhile, you increased your exports to Canada by a similar rate to US\$4.4 billion, or more than US\$1 billion above your exports to Spain.

Canadians and New Englanders share more than a trading relationship. Much of Atlantic Canada is populated with descendants of those Americans who emigrated northward at the time of your revolution.

A century later, hundreds of thousands of French Canadians came south to work in your factories and mills. The largest exodus of its kind in Canadian history, it endowed New England with its Franco-American culture. And the close proximity of Franco-Americans to Quebec has resulted in the recent flourishing of French-speaking culture in northern New England states. It has also stimulated our mutual interest for doing business with one another, as demonstrated by the numerous trade and investment missions in both directions.