

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today.

Today's program is one of over 250 events scheduled across the country during Export Trade Month. Though they're all important, this is a special event. The presentation of the Canada Export Awards is a national recognition of those companies that best embody the Trade Month objective of better export performance.

Trade Month is designed to heighten public awareness of the key role played by exports in the Canadian economy. The relationship between export sales and employment is direct, and central to our well-being as a nation. Last year, we exported more than 90 billion dollars worth of goods and services: nearly a third of Canada's Gross National Product. And 3 million jobs in our country depend on those sales.

We want to encourage business people to think about export opportunities. These are virtually unlimited. For those who are not now exporters, we want you to examine the export option. And, we want those already involved in exporting to consider prospects for expansion.

The new government has made international trade a priority, and the trade support programs offered by the Department of External Affairs will reflect that priority.

The federal and provincial governments together offer a very broad range of trade support programs. Federal assistance starts with advice from our Trade Commissioners in posts around the world on market potential in their areas and goes on to provide promotional support through trade fairs and business missions. Help with export insurance and financing is also available.

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Two weeks ago I attended a major international exhibition of public transit equipment in Washington and met with representatives of 24 Canadian companies offering the high technology products demanded by the international marketplace. This event was significant, not only because it was the kick-off of Export Trade Month, and not only because it took place in the capital of the United States, our largest trading partner. It was significant because the multi-billion dollar market for mass transit equipment in cities around the globe is a market in which Canadian companies compete strongly and successfully. This could be no better example of our ability as a nation working together, to achieve our economic goals against tough international competition.

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