

Rim, which as you know has become the fastest growing area in the world. We have opened new trade offices in Japan and China, and dispatched more trade commissioners to the area.

But that is far from all.

As Minister for International Trade, I spend a great deal of my time pounding the streets of the world to promote Canadian exports. I have been to Eastern Europe twice, to Western Europe three times, to the Far East, to Australia and New Zealand. And on Friday I head off again, this time on an around-the-world trade mission. My first stop will be London, for a strategy session with our trade commissioners all over Western Europe on how we can increase our trade in that vital area of the world. Then it's off to Southeast Asia -- to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong. There, my principal mission will be to help open doors for Canadian businesses in the ASEAN countries.

As you know, I had to postpone a trip to South America last fall because of pressing government business in Ottawa. I greatly regretted having to put it off, and I fully intend to reschedule it at the first opportunity this year. As I will explain in a few moments, Latin America is very important to us.

Now let's talk about the GATT. Any bilateral agreement we conclude with the U.S. must also take into account our global trading needs and meet our obligations to the GATT. It would be plain stupid for Canada -- or the United States, for that matter -- to sign an agreement that would in any way discourage our trade with the rest of the world. Indeed, the probability is that a Canada-U.S. trade agreement would contribute to lowering trade barriers everywhere.

This will be a watershed year for the world's trading nations. After more than a year of hemming and hawing, a majority of the 90 or so nations that participate in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade have agreed to begin the next round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations sometime after this summer.

Under this Government, Canada has played a leading role in getting the world's trading nations to agree to start the next round. We have sent official delegations throughout the world -- obviously including Latin America -- to line up support and make preliminary attempts to determine an agenda. I myself have pushed for the new round in discussions with the trade ministers and ambassadors from many countries.

We did not make a big display of this -- diplomacy is often more effective when it is done quietly -- but we have been very active in our efforts. And to underscore our enthusiasm, we have offered to host the Ministerial Conference that will get the next round underway. We have suggested that the conference be held in Montreal in September.

This will be the eighth GATT round, and its objective will be to reverse the movement towards protectionism that is building in the world, to lower more trade barriers, to tighten some of the loopholes and modernize the GATT system.

Through its first seven rounds of multilateral trade negotiations, the GATT has generally worked well. It has succeeded in cutting tariff levels roughly in half. It has established the framework for an orderly trading system and reduced the trade frictions that exist between nations. Largely because of its efforts, the volume of world trade has grown sevenfold since