

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be able to join Premier McKenna in opening Interaction 89, this excellent interantional trade show and conference being sponsored by the Government of New Brunswick on behalf of the Eastern Canadian Premiers and New England Governors.

Over the past year, we have heard a great deal about the costs and benefits of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

I would suggest that Interaction 89 speaks louder than all those words.

Unlike all the verbal fearmongering about lost pensions and the end of medicare, this trade fair is real. This is what free trade is really all about. Nothing more and nothing less than Canadian enterprises creating jobs by selling their goods and services to an expanding customer base. It is nothing scary. No blind leap of faith. It is what Canadians have been doing for centuries, long before confederation.

As you know, I have been a long time supporter of the concept of freer trade between the great nations of North America. And the reason for my support is simple.

Freer Trade is an idea which is in the national interest of Canada, because it increases our ability to create companies of competitive scale. And freer trade is in the regional interest of Atlantic Canada.

In fact, I am absolutely confident that a quarter century from now, the people of Atlantic Canada will look back and recognize that the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was the single most important initiative ever taken to promote our regional development -- just as the people of Ontario now view the AutoPact two decades after its signing.

I say that for a number of reasons. Let me list just four.

First, I believe the energy terms of the FTA will help promote the future development of our hydro and hydrocarbon resources -- megaprojects like James Bay II and Hibernia which will not only bring export earnings to Canada, but which will provide numerous business opportunities for the many smaller businesses which exist to service the needs of such large enterprises.

Second, the liberalization of government procurement practices will create significant opportunities for enterprising entrepreneurs.