

Thank you, Paul,¹ and good morning ladies and gentlemen.

I am very pleased to be here today to launch a new and critical phase of the Fashion Apparel Sector Campaign (FASC).

We are here at one of Canada's most successful apparel manufacturers, which is affiliated with one of our most important apparel retailers. Weston Apparel and its parent, Dylex, are showing that Canadians have what it takes to succeed in a competitive global economy.

The apparel sector includes a number of Canada's most successful and competitive entrepreneurs, with over 2,000 firms producing virtually every kind of apparel. This sector has been very successful in meeting the apparel needs of Canadians. And exports to the United States have more than doubled since 1988. With highly targeted and aggressive marketing, the men's suits sector, in particular, has been so effective that Canada now leads all other countries except Italy in exports of men's suits to the United States. However, this record is no guarantee that they will be able to continue to succeed in rapidly changing market conditions. The industry has recognized it faces a number of strategic challenges, and is responding.

The Government of Canada and the apparel industry are today launching a sector campaign to help the industry win in a more competitive, more integrated global market. The industry has taken the lead in helping itself make that adjustment. In designing and participating in the Fashion Apparel Sector Campaign, Canada's apparel designers, manufacturers and distributors recognize that there are some strategic concerns that demand an industry-wide response.

I want to say that the structure of this campaign and the industry's commitment to its implementation does credit to the leadership of the industry, in general, and to the Canadian Apparel Manufacturers Institute, in particular. They identified areas where the industry as a whole had to play a much stronger role, and made a proposal to Industry, Science and Technology Canada (ISTC).

The result is a two-part campaign: first, the establishment of the first cross-Canada, industry-wide association -- the Canadian Apparel Federation (CAF); and second, an inter-firm linkages program to improve collaboration among companies. Both the government and industry will contribute to these programs. I am pleased to announce today that the federal government has committed \$6.7 million to the campaign over the next four years.

¹ Paul Mancini, President of Weston Apparel, will introduce the Minister and industry representatives, then turn the podium over to the Minister.