

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As your new Minister for International Trade, I am very pleased to meet today with the Vancouver Board of Trade. It is perhaps fitting that my first two weeks as Minister are heavily focussed on activities on the Pacific coast. These events, here in Vancouver and in Seattle later this week, provide a ready-made opportunity for me to let you know where the Liberal government stands on trade, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. I also look forward to hearing your views on what we should be doing to help you succeed.

I am a former Vancouverite. I do not view Vancouver as the final destination of the railway line. On the contrary, I recognize it as Canada's departure point for the Pacific, and Pacific markets are vital to this country's economic prospects.

I will travel on from Vancouver to Seattle tomorrow morning to participate in the fifth Ministerial Meeting of APEC -- the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum -- which brings together ministers from 15 of the most dynamic of the world's economies.

This year, for the first time ever, the leaders of these countries will gather in conjunction with their ministers. This will be quite an event. I am told that APEC already appears in lights at the top of the Seattle space needle, and over 2000 journalists are descending on the city. Seattle clearly recognizes the significance of the meeting. We know that you in Vancouver are fully aware of the region's importance. Let us hope that Canadians across the country are also paying attention. Even *The Globe and Mail* has taken note of what is about to happen in Seattle, and thoughtfully gave me my instructions in Saturday's lead editorial -- this from a newspaper that closed its Tokyo office a couple of years ago. In a few moments, I will get back to APEC, and how it fits into our plan to strengthen the Canadian profile and presence in the dynamic Asian markets.

The Liberal government was elected on the strength of a forward-looking and balanced economic platform. Our "red book" clearly links economic and trade policy with job creation in Canada. Specifically, it looks outward to opportunities beyond this continent, setting sights on the Asia-Pacific region. My party has traditionally recognized the importance of the region. Indeed, it was a Liberal government that, in the late 1960s, took the bold decision to begin negotiations to establish diplomatic relations with China. This marked a key step in breaking the isolation of China and bringing it into the community of nations. In recognizing the PRC [People's Republic of China], Canada was a transpacific leader, not a follower.

My government will continue this forward-looking tradition when it comes to Asia-Pacific. It is in this spirit that we will be vigorously pursuing Canadian interests throughout this rich and vibrant region. I firmly believe that if Canada is to be a major