

I would like to thank the Pacific Basin Economic Council - Canadian Committee, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada and Industry Canada for their invitation to speak to you today. Having just returned from Ottawa, which has been pelted with snow for the past three weeks - and another 30 centimetres last night - I guess I'm a true "B.C.er" when I say the rain of the west coast is certainly a welcome sight!

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you today about the role of the federal government in international trade and more specifically, in increasing our trade with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region. A key part of my job as Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) is to enhance Canadian export opportunities to the region. As our government has clearly demonstrated during the two years we have been in office, trade - exports, investment and technology transfer - is central to sustaining Canadian prosperity. The export of Canadian goods and services accounts for over one quarter of Canada's gross domestic product. Directly and indirectly, exports sustain over two million jobs in Canada. Most importantly, the export sector has been the most dynamic element in stimulating economic growth in Canada. For all these reasons, international business development holds a high priority on our government's economic agenda.

Considerable progress has been made in recent months to bring down trade barriers in order to facilitate a better trade environment for Canadian businesses. We've had a successful conclusion, after almost seven years of negotiation, to the Uruguay Round of the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]. We've committed ourselves to the North American Free Trade Agreement - NAFTA. And we've worked hard to build bridges to Asia-Pacific markets through such vehicles as ASEAN [the Association of Southeast Asian Nations], ARF [the ASEAN Regional Forum] and through APEC [the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum]. I would like to spend some time today discussing the latter of these vehicles, APEC.

But before outlining the results of last week's APEC Ministerial and Summit in Osaka Japan - which I attended with Prime Minister Chrétien and Ministers Ouellet and MacLaren - I would like to take a moment to point out that, at the Summit, I had the tremendous privilege of announcing that Vancouver will host the APEC Ministerial and Summit in 1997. As Canada's gateway to the huge Pacific market, Vancouver is the engine behind Canada's new focus on the entire region. The APEC meetings will not only generate significant economic benefits for the entire city, but they will also put Vancouver on the map of every leader in the region.

APEC is presently the fastest-developing multilateral organization in the world. APEC enables Canada to pursue specific objectives such as expanding trade opportunities, promoting investment and trade liberalization, and protecting the environment. It provides an opportunity to match the region's