

Our country's prosperity and growth depend on our ability to innovate. Forum participants are well aware that the future economic growth of Quebec and Canada is tied to our ability to innovate and make use of leading-edge technology. The Quebec City area has been taking definite steps in this direction for a number of years. The federal government is proud to have participated in the establishment, in this region, of research institutions in various scientific fields, including the Institut des biomatériaux du Québec, the Institut de recherche du Centre hospitalier de l'Université Laval, and the Institut de recherche de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, not to mention Forintek. The Quebec City area thus has a critical mass of research specialists that is envied internationally. Over the years, the greater Quebec City region has earned a reputation as a major focus of research and development. The federal government's presence in the Quebec City area has led to beneficial economic spinoffs.

In the area of market development, the Government of Canada's goal is to provide entrepreneurs with the tools they need to succeed in a new global context. The establishment of the new World Trade Organization, the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] and interprovincial trade agreements have opened up new opportunities and challenges that require us to adapt. We must seek urgently to develop markets for our companies. FORD-Q has been given a mandate to deliver the federal government's export support programs to the entire province of Quebec. Last May, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Industry Canada and FORD-Q signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote and increase access to federal government programs and services in the area of international market development. We must identify new markets, but we must also prepare, inform and support our companies through programs and services drawing on the international network of the federal government and its partners.

The Government of Jean Chrétien has set itself a priority task: to stimulate economic growth and employment. International trade is the key to our prosperity. The Prime Minister's trade missions to Asia and Latin America, which were crowned with success, clearly demonstrate our determination. In this regard, the federal government has an important role to play in this regard. It can open doors to businesses, it can break down certain barriers, and it can use its influence and resources to help our companies conquer markets. In short, it is leading a fantastic team - Team Canada.

The new Foreign Policy Statement unveiled by my colleague the Honourable Roy MacLaren, the Minister for International Trade, and me last week is designed to support our efforts to stimulate growth and create jobs in Canada. This new policy will serve the interests of SMEs across Canada. It recognizes their key role in the growth of our economy.