

I attended the highly successful APEC Ministerial Meeting in Seoul last November. I was struck by how effectively this forum -- barely two years old -- operates, and by the opportunity it provides for ministers from the region to engage one another in substantive policy discussions.

We think APEC can and should become a leader on issues of international trade, for example, by defining innovative approaches to a new generation of issues that is being unleashed by the forces of globalization.

Trade is, of course, one of the principal vehicles of interaction among the members of the Asia Pacific community. Nothing defines better the ties that bind us, or the promise of even better things to come, than the movement of goods and services and the accompanying movement of capital, technology and ideas among our countries. The vitality of trade in our region is one of the success stories of the past 25 years and gives us every hope of an even more prosperous future together.

Through the web of institutions now sprouting in and across the Pacific, I believe our collective aim is to instill what might be called a "pacific trading culture," based on the freer movement of goods, services, ideas and capital. Such a trading culture in the Asia Pacific community would serve to reinforce an open, liberal trading regime at the global level.

But transforming this vision into reality will require concerted, mutually reinforcing efforts by governments, corporations, universities and other stakeholders. You have a huge stake in this process. It needs your talents, insights and support. We in government have a duty to build an appropriate policy framework, internationally, regionally and within our domestic economies, that can enable such an open, trading culture to take hold.

That is why the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN) remains Canada's number one international trade policy priority. We need a trade expanding agreement in Geneva that will give us the tools necessary to manage the changes brought about by globalization, which are affecting us all, and to reassert the global community's commitment to a liberal, rule-based trading regime. We need an agreement encompassing new subjects like trade in services and intellectual property, as well as better access for goods, including agriculture.

The continuing delay in concluding the Round, added to the recession-induced pressures in many of our economies, weakens business confidence and exacerbates international trade frictions.