

Someone once said that a conference is a gathering of important people who singly can do nothing, but together can decide that nothing can be done.

Now, I'm sure that this does not apply to today's gathering.

Quite the opposite.

Meetings such as this give us the opportunity to reach out and exchange views, hammer out problems and, above all, reinforce the links between us.

Those links are vitally important because we share a vital mission--to compete successfully for Canada.

External Affairs and International Trade Canada is your department.

In our 127 trade offices around the world and our 11 International Trade Centres across Canada, we identify promising markets and sectors, prepare visits to potential markets, arrange participation by Canadians in foreign trade fairs, and involve Canadian exporters in visits to Canada by foreign buyers.

In 1988-89, our programs and services helped to generate over \$5 billion worth of business for Canadians.

That same year, we handled over 130,000 enquiries by Canadian exporters and almost 124,000 enquiries from foreign importers interested in Canadian products.

Our trade missions received about 36,000 Canadian business visitors and counselled over 49,000 foreign business persons about Canada's export capabilities.

That is a pretty good record of service to the Canadian exporting community. But, we realize that our job is far from done.

That is why we are consulting the private sector and provincial governments extensively on the implementation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

That is why we are playing a leading role in the all-important multilateral trade negotiations under the GATT.

That is why we are strengthening our International Trade Centres across the country and opening new satellite trade offices in strategic locations around the world.

That is why we have programs such as Canada Export Trade Month and Marketplace 89.