

Before I deal with my main topic today, I would like to begin with something of particular interest to this group. I am announcing today an assistance package to help the St. John's Board of Trade in your marketing efforts in the United States.

This assistance will take the form of:

- Printing the Looking South Export Opportunities Guide, researched by the Board of Trade;
- A New Exporters to Border States (NEBS) mission to help local small and medium sized businesses break into or expand exports to the Northeastern U.S.; and
- A NEBS support structure to follow up with assistance for participants in the mission to the U.S.

The value of the two NEBS items, approximately \$27,000, plus \$8,000 for printing the Export Opportunities Guide, brings the total value of this assistance to \$35,000.

This is just one further investment by the government, by the Board of Trade and by the businesspersons who will participate, toward achieving the full benefits of Free Trade with the U.S.

For my main topic, I want to speak to you today about Canada's constitution. The time has come to set the record straight about some of the extreme and even absurd statements made by Premier Wells with respect to the Meech Lake Accord and the future of our province and our country.

Mr. Wells has made his rejection of the Meech Lake Accord into a personal crusade in which he has engaged the full credibility of this province's government. Mr. Wells is wrong about the Accord and his call for Newfoundlanders to join him in making this the central economic issue facing our province is badly misplaced. The provisions of the Accord are not central to the economic future of our province. They are, however, central to the political future of our nation.

Let me begin with the national issue, the unity of our country. As one of this nation's elder statesmen, Robert Stanfield, said on October 23,

"For the federal government and the provinces to support Meech Lake represents ... a newer vision of a federal-provincial relationship and the end of the debate about the place of Quebec ...