

opportunity for bilateral meetings with Senator Evans to discuss issues of importance to both Canada and Australia in the region.

Let me turn for a moment to the Canada-Australia relationship.

As I indicated earlier, the Canada-Australia relationship goes back many years, even to the early recorded history of both countries. Captain Cook, after charting the waters around Australia, went on to Canada where he helped General Wolfe navigate the St. Lawrence River in preparation for the historic battle on the Plains of Abraham which changed the course of Canadian history.

A number of events are planned next year to mark the centenary of Canada-Australia trade relations. This will include a visit by our International Trade Minister, my colleague Roy MacLaren, who will inaugurate a major trade and investment conference in Sydney next February. We are also hopeful that later in the year visits by Foreign Affairs Minister Ouellet and Prime Minister Chrétien can be arranged.

Canada-Australia relations are long-standing, friendly and broadly based. In addition to the historical links, bilateral trade and investment are substantial but could be higher. Two-way trade is at the \$2-billion mark and Australia is Canada's fifth-largest market in the region, and probably our best market in the Asia-Pacific region for elaborately transformed manufactures.

For decades we have had a history and practice of consulting together on international issues and domestic public policy issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, environment, native land title, health care, federal-state relations, etc. Because of the similarities between our two countries, we have a high level of comfort between the bureaucracies. This is best illustrated by the fact that at any one time there are around 15 Canadian public servants working within the Australian bureaucracy and a similar number of Australian officials in Ottawa.

We get along so well that we have even begun to share diplomatic premises abroad — the Canadian Ambassador to Cambodia works in the Australian Embassy; The Australian High Commission in Barbados shares the Canadian High Commission offices in Bridgetown.

Despite this excellent bilateral relationship (or maybe because of it), there has been a tendency over the past few years to take each other for granted to some extent. Some have explained this by suggesting that Canada has been rather preoccupied by its domestic agenda and the Canada-U.S. FTA [Free Trade Agreement], then the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement], while