

It is a great pleasure to speak to you today. The events of the last two days will have left none of you in any doubt as to the commitment of both Canada and China – at the highest levels of our leadership – to our valuable bilateral relationship. This is the third time as Minister for International Trade that I have had the pleasure of addressing your conference. I spoke in Vancouver in 1993 and in Beijing during the Team Canada mission last year. We have together reviewed the importance of the Canada-China trading relationship. We have together witnessed the burgeoning opportunities of the Chinese market.

The Canada-China Business Council has played a vital role in this process. Your efforts have contributed significantly to building the Canada-China economic relationship. Your practical advice has guided the Government's efforts to strengthen the environment in which trade and investment between our two countries can flourish.

That includes Canada's consistent support for China's efforts to open its market by extending it most-favoured-nation trading status. That also includes our active support for China's early accession to the World Trade Organization [WTO]. Our focus has always been on enhanced access for Canadian goods and services.

The accession of China to the WTO is one of the key issues that will govern Canada-China trade and investment ties in the time ahead. I hardly need remind you of the weight of China's presence today in the world economy or its importance to Canada. The size of China's economy has quadrupled since 1980, with annual growth averaging 9 per cent. It is now the world's 11th-largest trading nation.

In the past decade, China's exports to Canada have grown by 27 per cent annually. Canada's exports to China have increased by 14 per cent annually. Last year they were up by one third. They have surged by a further 50 per cent in the first six months of this year. This is an outstanding performance, but only a foretaste of what is yet to come. We are determined to meet Prime Minister Chrétien's challenge, issued in Beijing last year, to achieve \$20 billion in business annually with China by the year 2000. And that's not taking into account the burgeoning growth in our trade with Hong Kong.

The establishment of the World Trade Organization on January 1 was a momentous achievement for the international community. Its importance to the future of world trade can hardly be overstated. The WTO realizes a dream to create an effective referee over the frequently turbulent, sometimes dangerous and always demanding competition of world markets.

It is of concern, however, that China, a country of such magnitude, is not a full partner in the World Trade Organization. China is an increasingly important supplier to world markets. China is also an increasingly important customer, not least, as I