

Central to our trade policy has traditionally been our strong support for an open multilateral trade regime; and our equally strong resistance to any erosion of what has so far been accomplished.

If, however, we now find that trade which is important to us is impeded by managed trade, subsidized trade and counter-trade, what should our attitude be?

I do not think we can abandon our traditional support for the multilateral system and trade liberalization. The logic of its benefits to us is too compelling.

Instead, we must work through multilateral organizations, especially the GATT, to keep the trading system open, so our exporters have a fair chance. We should work closely with the United States and our other trading partners to keep the system open, to persuade them that their best interests lie not in protectionism but in adjustment to change.

The next round of multilateral negotiations will try to bring non-tariff barriers under control. This is the single most important issue that the GATT contracting parties will face. In doing so, we all will also have to deal with the issue of structural adjustment. Most of the problems of the trading system since the early 1970s - especially non-tariff barriers - have been caused by the difficulties that economies experience in adjusting to the pressures of change.

While we prepare for these negotiations, we must at the same time redouble our trade development efforts. I had the pleasure of opening Export Trade Month in the company of some of our most active hi-tech exporters. We were in Washington for the International Public Transit Expo. Canada is a world leader in those technologies, and Canada was the largest single exhibitor at the fair. Trade fairs are held around the globe, and our Export Marketing Bureau can help you in displaying your products and services at all of them.

Later in the month, I also had the pleasure of opening the new trade information centre, Info Export, which is located in the Department of External Affairs building in Ottawa. It's there for your use, and I hope you will use it. It provides a toll-free telephone service to put you in touch with the trade professionals in federal government departments.