

nation. They have been active in trade missions in Mexico in unprecedented numbers, making contacts, finding partners and signing deals. Our embassy in Mexico received 4,500 Canadian business visitors in 1992, eager to find new customers and partners in the Mexican market -- up from approximately 1,000 in 1990.

The NAFTA is clearly widening Canadian horizons. It's giving us a bigger stage on which to demonstrate and prove our economic expertise and leadership.

Our capacity to manoeuvre in the global marketplace will be even more enhanced with the successful completion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations under the GATT, which remains Canada's top trade priority.

In the meantime, the NAFTA is fully compatible with GATT rules and raises no barriers against other trading nations. It extends free trade on a regional basis.

This approach has received the support of the GATT Secretary-General Arthur Dunkel, who said last year:

Multilateralism and regionalism can co-exist; better, they actually reinforce one another.... The founders of the GATT never thought to place global and regional approaches to trade liberalization in opposition, but considered them to be two sides of the same coin.

Canadians can venture into new markets assured by the growing evidence of our increasing export success. Last year was an outstanding one for Canadian exports. It is the export sector that is leading the way in the current expansion.

Merchandise exports for 1992 reached record levels of \$157.5 billion. That's an 11-per cent increase over the previous year, and it is the largest year-over-year increase since 1984.

The increases in our exports to the United States alone were even greater. Sales to the U.S., our largest market, were \$122.3 billion, a 13.6-per cent increase over 1991.

The picture continues to get better. Our monthly exports soared to \$14.6 billion in January, 16 per cent higher than the same month last year.

Exports to the United States in January were more than \$2 billion higher, a 22-per cent increase over the previous year.

Our world trade surplus jumped a remarkable \$898 million to reach \$1.9 billion in January alone.

When I see figures like these I have to wonder how long the honourable members opposite can continue to criticize the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.