

The market access paper is only one of the initiatives the Government has been taking to improve Canada's trading performance. At the end of next week I will be in Regina to assist Prime Minister Mulroney and the Premiers of Canada's ten provinces in a discussion of trade policy options.

The First Ministers' Conference will be an important prelude to the National Economic Summit Conference in March. During the Summit, Canadian business people, labour leaders, academics, politicians and others will meet in a spirit of cooperation to identify the challenges and chart new objectives. Achieving economic renewal will involve action on many fronts. It requires putting our fiscal house in order. It requires redefining the role of government so that it provides a better framework for growth and job creation. It involves establishing incentives for investment, both Canadian and foreign. And most importantly from the perspectives we share in this room, it involves the promotion and encouragement of our exports to the rest of the world.

That includes giving our full support to keeping the world trading system open in the face of strong protectionist pressures. The new protectionism is one of the products of the world's recent economic and financial problems -- recession, compounded by high oil prices, compounded by mercurial interest rates, compounded by inflation, compounded by the international debt crisis which forced many nations to reduce imports.

Being the product of so many fathers, the new protectionism has been less predictable in its forms and its effects than plain old-fashioned tariff protection. Orderly marketing arrangements, new taxation, subsidization, government purchasing practices and slight variations in domestic technical standards have all had a protectionist effect. This has created a serious erosion of the open multilateral trading system.

Central to our new trade strategy will be a determined effort to reverse this protectionist trend, and I am encouraged by the emerging international consensus in favour of a new round of GATT negotiations.