

Earlier, I noted that the Government of Canada is currently undertaking a fundamental reassessment of our policies and approach to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. As you are aware, this is a complex task, given the impact of such changes on Western Europe during a period when the European Community itself is in a state of transition.

Our study necessarily is embracing all aspects of the relationship, from national security to international trade. And it often involves a cooperative effort with other nations, not only in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but in the GATT, the World Bank and the IMF as well. In fact, one of the most useful roles Canada can play in fostering Soviet development lies in developing the proper multilateral framework.

On a bilateral basis, we are continuing to reassess the level of assistance to exporters and business in general. We hope to be able to open the new consulate in Kiev later this year to assist Canadian business persons pursuing opportunities in the Ukraine. We have planned a program of at least 3 stands at major Soviet exhibitions in agricultural technology, information management technology and airport technology. And a number of future missions are in the works, including the trade mission which I will personally lead to the USSR this year. Hopefully, many of you present today will be able to join me.

These are all practical initiatives which we can take to foster closer ties between our two countries.

And that is why we welcome this conference, given its emphasis on the practical and achievable.

We welcome the chance for more Canadian firms to become informed of both the opportunities and the risks implicit in change, so that relationships can be built with understanding and confidence.

And I can assure Minister Katushev that the Canadian government looks forward to working with his government and with both Canadian and Soviet firms as we continue to build a solid and lasting relationship between our two countries.