

Before I begin my other remarks, I would like to announce the launch of an initiative to assist businesses throughout the Atlantic provinces to expand and diversify their activities in New England.

The Atlantic Canada Trade, Tourism and Investment Initiative in New England reflects the federal government's continuing commitment to supporting Atlantic Canada business in taking advantage of the opportunities created by the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. As part of the initiative, External Affairs and International Trade Canada officials will lead 10 New Exporters to Border States (NEBS) missions to New England this year. Missions from Atlantic Canada will be organized to develop markets in New England in the following areas: fish technology, frozen lobsters, under-utilized fish species, environmental services, construction, defence, ocean technology, software and building materials.

Another key focus of the initiative will be the launch in Boston of an "Invest in Atlantic Canada" Conference, to attract manufacturing and services industry executives. And, to foster diversification of the Atlantic Canada economy, the development of Atlantic Canada's tourism potential will be assisted through two tourism missions.

The Atlantic Initiative represents a new approach to supporting Atlantic Canada companies. Working with the Canadian Consulate in Boston, companies will be able to forge new business relationships and explore the promising new markets in New England created by the Free Trade Agreement.

Forty-five years ago, Canadian historian Donald Creighton summed up Canada's relationship with the United States: "For Canada", he said, "friendship with the United States is the first essential of existence and the first instinct of nature."

Sixteen years later, President John F. Kennedy spoke of that bond in a joint address to Canada's House of Commons and Senate: "Geography has made us neighbours. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies. Those whom nature hath so joined together, let no man put asunder. What unites us is far greater than what divides us."

The closeness of our relationship means that Canada is often described in the context of the United States. Distinguished Canadian author, Robertson Davies, spoke of Canada as "Pin and pine, Snow and slow, America's