

Mrs. Tourangeau, in the formation of a new Council of Canadian Trading Houses. The Council could provide an accreditation procedure for trading houses. It could represent their interests at the federal level. And it could promote the services of the sector to manufacturers and producers. It is my hope that a strong Council, with fulltime staff devoted to these very important activities, will make significant inroads into the problems faced by trading houses. I have no doubt that this type of effort will lead to a better understanding of trading house capabilities by suppliers, Canadian Financial Institutions and, yes, even by Government.

One of the main conclusions of the Task Force Report was that the Trading House sector requires more equitable treatment by government. To address this issue 27 recommendations were directed at various federal government departments, agencies and crown corporations.

I am pleased to inform you that my department has already implemented some of the task force recommendations. We have established a Trading House and Countertrade Division to act as a focal point for trading houses in Ottawa and to provide information and education on their role and function to both the public and private sector. Departmental instructions have been issued to our personnel in Canada and abroad seeking their fullest cooperation in assisting trading houses to increase their exports to existing markets and penetrate new markets.

Let me wander for a moment into territory that may not be specifically marked out on trading house maps. Most of you, I believe, are aware that I am engaged in a process of consultation with the private sector on the question of securing and enhancing access to the markets of Canada's most important trading partner, the United States. These consultations are almost complete now, and I expect to submit preliminary recommendations to Cabinet next month. I know that most trading houses do most of their business outside of North America, and I suspect that some of you may have concerns about how any deal we might strike with the United