

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to participate in the sixth annual general meeting of the Canada-China Trade Council. I confess, however, that I am somewhat awed by the responsibility of being your keynote speaker, for I am all too aware of whom I am speaking to. A great many of you are dedicated experts in Canada-China relations. Some of you have been to China many times. A few of you are members of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China -- and I particularly welcome your presence here, for the Embassy has been a source of enormous strength in building relations between our two countries. Not only that, I'm sure that Ambassador Yu will be happy to correct me if I miss the mark.

In the face of all this expertise, I must confess that I feel like a Junior League hockey player called up to give Wayne Gretzky lessons on how to score goals.

Except that, as Canada's Minister for International Trade, I do have some resources to call upon, and I have a feeling for where Canada is going in trade. So please bear with me. I may not tell you a great deal that you don't already know, but I may tell you something.

Let me start with the big picture.

It will come as no news to anyone here that revitalizing Canada's trade performance is one of the highest priorities of the Progressive-Conservative government. The Prime Minister has spoken about it often. It was prominent in the Finance Minister's economic statement in November. I myself have mentioned it from time to time.

I think you are also familiar with the broad outlines of our strategy. We intend to examine, in consultation with the private sector and the provincial governments, various avenues of securing and enhancing access for our exports to world markets. We will shortly be issuing a discussion paper on export financing. We will be active in encouraging the world's trading nations to embark on a new round of multilateral trade negotiations under the GATT. We will explore the options open to us to strengthen our business ties with our number one trading partner, the United States. And we will be launching a big push to expand our trade with the nations of the Pacific Rim, which as you know is the fastest growing area, economically, in the world.

So much for the big picture. My purpose today is to zero in on the "small" picture -- China.

Some small pictures are bigger than others.