

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Exports are vital to Canada. They account for close to 30 percent of our Gross Domestic Product and they create new and challenging jobs for Canadians across the country.

Canada must be successful in the international marketplace to continue to grow and prosper. We secure our future by meeting global competition head-on, by ensuring that we have in place the economic conditions and the access to world markets needed to sell our products and services.

The Canada Export Award Program gives me the opportunity to recognize publicly the dedication, perseverance, professionalism and excellence of some of Canada's leading exporters. Current and past winners of the Award are a source of inspiration for all those companies that are striving to achieve international success.

The signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the coming into force of the World Trade Organization provide Canadian exporters with better access for their products and services, and help strengthen their competitive position. Canadian firms must now take advantage of these trade policy results and pursue strongly new opportunities, not only in our traditional American and European markets but also in the fast-growing markets of Asia and Latin America.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), mainly through its domestic and foreign network of Trade Commissioners, provides Canadian businesses with trade development assistance in markets all around the world. Canada's Trade Commissioner Service, celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, continues to provide a most valuable service to Canadian firms: up-to-date market information and intelligence.

With the advent of new technologies and in the face of fiscal constraint, the government has launched a number of new initiatives aimed at providing the business community with information on federal and provincial government services and programs. For example, the opening of Canada Business Service Centres across the country, established with the cooperation of the provinces and the private sector, brings together under one roof quick and easy access to information that businesses need.

The creation of the Canadian Business Centre in Mexico City is another example of an innovative approach to informing and supporting Canadian companies that are interested in foreign markets. Operated by DFAIT on a cost-shared basis, the Centre offers Canadians many valuable services to help them conduct business, including temporary office and exhibit space, meeting and seminar facilities, market information, and contacts with key business representatives.

Exports, in general, and high value-added exports in particular, mean thousands of new jobs and the prospect of sustained economic growth and productivity. With government and the business community working together and using their capabilities to the fullest, we can seize opportunities as they arise and contribute to a brighter future for Canadians.



Roy MacLaren
Minister for International Trade