

I want to express my great appreciation to all the members of the Board, who have so willingly given us their time and advice. I have written to each of them to express my thanks and those of the government. But I would like to pay particular tribute here to Roger Hatch, the Chairman of the Board, who has made a special contribution to Canada's international trade -- as head of the ETDB and, before that Chairman of the Canadian Export Association, and, of course, as the author of the "Hatch Report" on trade development. Roger, we are in your debt.

Over the last year I have been pleased to implement a number of trade promotion initiatives. One small measure, which appears to have had large results and clearly met the requirements of the business community, was the establishment of a trade information centre in External Affairs. We call it Info Export.

This centre is staffed by several of our trade commissioners and their job is to provide information and advice to exporters and potential exporters throughout the country. Info Export is really the other end of a toll free telephone line. Small and medium sized firms across Canada pay nothing to obtain our assistance. In the year and six days since I opened Info Export, my trade commissioners have handled approximately 16,200

telephone calls. Let me give you the number. It's 1-800-267-8376, and our operators are standing by. Once again, the number is 1-800-267-8376.

Another trade initiative, and a major project for my department, was Marketplace 85. We brought back 150 trade commissioners from their posts around the world. They spent most of the month of March travelling through Canada. They met with more than 3,000 companies and conducted more than 9,000 interviews, one on one. I am particularly pleased with the results: more than 700 companies decided to go into the export business for the first time, and my trade officers are working with all of them to assist their international marketing activities.

I hope that we can be just as successful next March, in Marketplace 86. It is our intention to focus on the U.S. and Asia-Pacific markets in next year's program. Those are the areas in which we see the best prospects to increase our exports, and we are trying to assist. In the year and six days since I opened Info Export, my trade commissioners have handled approximately 16,200 telephone calls. Let me give you the number. It's 1-800-267-8376, and our operators are standing by. Once again, the number is 1-800-267-8376.