

The programs required to implement our strategy are contained in Bill C-21, an Act to Amend the Unemployment Insurance Act.

This Act provides for adjustment programs for communities across Canada. It also will reduce the qualifying period from 14 weeks to 10 weeks in harder hit areas of Atlantic Canada.

Unfortunately, the UIC legislation has met the same fate as the FTA and the GST. Over 350 million dollars set aside for retraining 60,000 workers is being blocked in the Senate. Our 100 million dollar entry-level training program is also being obstructed by a few unelected voices from the past.

The Senate's obstruction of the GST and UIC will increase the federal deficit and will aggravate interest rate and currency concerns in the business community.

The issues at stake strike at the heart of our national interest. If you share our view that the Senate's actions will adversely affect Canada's exporting interests we urge you to express your concerns loud and clear.

In closing, I am extremely pleased to see that External Affairs and International Trade Canada is so well represented here today. I am also delighted to see that, once again, the Export Development Corporation and the Canadian Commercial Corporation are making a major contribution to your Annual Convention.

I congratulate your Chairman, Paul Koenderman, and your President, Jim Taylor, for organizing such a successful event.

And now I would like to turn to this year's Export Awards. Later this evening, we will be honouring companies that are competing effectively in Europe, Asia, the United States and around the world.

Their competitiveness in global markets is, after all, what International Trade Month is all about. I salute their efforts.

Thank you.