

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today. It is a particular pleasure to welcome to Vancouver all members of the Canadian Export Association as well as the other organizations represented here - the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Chamber of Commerce and the Provincial Government.

The presentation of the Canada Export Awards is one of more than 200 events taking place across Canada during Export Trade Month. All the events are important, but this one is special. Today we are giving national recognition to those companies that best embody one of Canada's national objectives - better export performance.

It is a pleasure as Minister for International Trade and as a Minister from B.C. that four former winners from this province are represented here today. I should also add that Reg Barclay's company, Seaboard Lumber and Mr. Gourdeau's SNC, as well as several other companies in the audience are recipients of the Canada Export Award. The level of export excellence represented here makes my job both easier and more rewarding.

Export Trade Month is a cooperative program. It involves business people, educators and trade officials in various departments and agencies of the federal and provincial governments. This cooperation reflects the growing consensus in Canada that our future prosperity is dependent upon improving our export performance.

Export Trade Month is the most extensive awareness program devoted to the promotion of export trade. It was started four years ago by Federal and Provincial Trade Ministers and is intended to create an understanding of the importance of exports to our economy - to focus on the benefits of exports and to encourage increased participation in export trade.

During Export Trade Month provincial committees from coast to coast stage events to assist exporters, from new exporters to the seasoned practitioner. Universities, schools and media carry the message to students and to the public.

We are attempting to raise public awareness across the country on the critical role played by export trade in our national economy. Something like three million Canadian jobs depend on export activity. Our message is that there is a direct economic relationship between export activity and economic health. We want that relationship to be understood by every Canadian.

We are also directing a message to the business community -- in particular, the small and medium sized enterprises which provide the majority of jobs in Canada -- to make them aware of the opportunities that exist in the international marketplace.