

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the 1990 Canadian International Fur Fair, and to offer a special welcome to our guests from abroad who are here, in Montreal, today.

I want to express the gratitude of the Government of Canada for the efforts of the Fur Council of Canada in defending and promoting the Canadian fur industry.

One of the realities of the modern world is that foreign policy isn't foreign anymore. Actions countries take at home can have serious implications for their interests abroad. And developments abroad can have a crucial impact on the citizens of any country.

That reality is clear to Canadians. Our prosperity depends on trade with the world. That means we must be alert to changes in attitudes, changes in public opinion around the globe. One of those changes is the new priority which international consumers assign to respect for the natural environment. Increasingly, consumers are demanding that the products they buy not be damaging to the environment - either in terms of the effects of the products themselves or the processes which went into making them.

It is these two factors - the requirement to trade and the requirement to satisfy environmental concerns - that have presented your industry with its greatest challenge of recent years. There is nothing automatic about the success of the fur industry. Furs are fashion - and fashions change. The market has to be continually earned, and this takes hard work. Hard work by governments and hard work by the industry itself.

Very few industries are affected more by foreign events than the fur industry. Decisions in other countries pose a direct and serious threat to what you do. That threat is based on the sentiment in some parts of the world that your industry is inhumane and that it breaks the balance of nature. That argument has to be met through action and through persuasion. The arsenal of the opponents of the fur industry is based on emotion. We can't shout them down or declare war on those countries which are taking action against your industry. Nor can we convince consumers that they owe it to nature to continue to purchase furs. What is needed is rational argument and purposeful action to bring the industry more in line with public expectations.

That has been the strategy of the Canadian Government in Europe and elsewhere. In Great Britain, the Government of Canada mounted a major campaign to convince the British government that this industry is important to Canadians, particularly its trapping component. We told them that it is especially important to remote communities and often to lower-income groups, including native Canadians. We told them that the industry contributes over 100,000 jobs to the Canadian economy and generates \$600 million in business. We also told them that 50,000 aboriginal Canadians are involved in the fur business. We won that battle. And we won it through sensible argument, high level political action and persistence.