

Thank you for the warm welcome.

I am pleased to be here at the start of Canadian Manufacturing Week. This is clearly the largest industrial marketplace ever held in Canada, and I am very impressed by the number and mix of exhibitors.

The fact that this event is taking place during Canada's official Export Month shows the critical linkage between manufacturing and exports and the contribution of your industry to the prosperity of our country.

A year ago, I had the pleasure to speak to you and welcome your new president, Steve Van Houten. Given the times and the crucial role of the manufacturing sector in our economy, the challenge for Steve and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA) was, and remains, considerable. I want to congratulate you, Steve, and the members of your organization, for taking up this challenge and for making a real contribution to the Prosperity Initiative through your active participation in the Prosperity industry consultations and your 1991 plan for eliminating interprovincial trade barriers.

As Steve Van Houten and Peter Green said in the CMA's paper, "The Aggressive Economy: Competing to Win:" "The next ten years will bring about more change in the way business is done than we have seen in the past fifty..."

It is for just such reasons that the Prosperity Initiative was launched, to consult with Canadians and to develop a plan of action for business, labour, governments and other sectors of our society in order to meet the pressing competitive challenges facing Canada. Then and now, the essential component of Canada's ability to face those challenges is the need to build new partnerships that will make competitiveness and prosperity a truly national project.

Over the past year, the Prosperity Steering Group, led by Marie-Josée Drouin and David McCamus, has received hundreds of submissions and heard views from thousands of Canadians involved in the nationwide consultation process. One of the recurring themes in the consultation process was the importance of developing innovative partnerships among all Canadians as a basic prerequisite to improving our competitiveness.

The Steering Group will release its national Action Plan in the next few weeks. I understand that its recommendations will be directed at all sectors of our society. The Plan will provide a blueprint for all of us to work together in the five areas identified as essential to Canada's future well-being:

1. learning and skills upgrading;
2. science, technology, research and development;