

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests:

I am absolutely delighted to be in South Africa at a time of such historic significance and change. This is truly a period of transition for South Africans, and I want to underscore here tonight Canada's intention to be constructively engaged in your efforts to define the "new South Africa."

As you are aware, Canada has been a vociferous advocate for political change in this country, change that would result in each citizen regardless of race or gender being able to exercise the simple right to vote and thereby participate in the democratic process.

That new day is finally arriving on April 27. Nonetheless it is clear that unless political enfranchisement is accompanied by the ability to advance economically in this society, the political freedoms that have been won with such great sacrifice and at such a high cost will be incomplete.

Thus I share the thinking of many of you here tonight that efforts must be made to put an end to economic apartheid. How you set out to achieve this goal is a matter for South Africans to decide. Nonetheless, I can assure you that in those areas in which we as Canadians can be of assistance, we will endeavour to be so.

In this respect I must underscore my personal conviction that the transformation of society cannot be undertaken by a government on its own and without the support of the rest of society. In the economic sphere the co-operation of the private sector is vital.

This is one of the reasons why, as Minister for International Trade on my first visit to South Africa, I invited several leading private-sector participants to join me. I recognize that they have an important role to play that, even with the best will in the world, neither my government nor myself can undertake.

It is the private sector that will engage in trade and investment activities with their South African counterparts. It is the private sector that will enter into joint venture and licensing arrangements with South Africans. And ultimately, it is the flow of new investment from these private-sector activities that will result in the creation of new jobs and the uplifting and empowerment of a broad spectrum of South Africans.

What do we have to offer at this time, you may ask? My role as a minister of the Canadian government is to ensure that the appropriate structures are in place that will permit the private sector to do what it does best. In this regard, since the lifting of sanctions, the Government has endeavoured to reinstate all trade support measures that had been withdrawn when sanctions were imposed. One or two remaining issues are being handled expeditiously.