

being put into practice by our larger companies such as Nortel, MacDonald Dettwiler, Cognos, Placer Pacific, Weston Star Trucks, and McCain. Small to medium-sized Canadian firms such as Duha Paints, Walenga, Eco-Logic, and Maxter Industries are also actively involved in, or pursuing, alliances with Australian counterparts to do business in Australia and neighbouring countries. We in turn have been urging Canadian firms to use Australia as a gateway or Bridgehead to South East Asia.

At the government level, we are also beginning to examine whether we couldn't work more closely together in the area of science and technology were we both have particular strengths.

Alone we often find ourselves at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the research and development efforts of countries like the United States and Japan.

If we could ally our strengths in a few well-chosen areas we may jointly be able to mount successful ventures internationally. We have in mind sectors such as informatics, communications, space, remote sensing and defence technologies. Our hope is that Canada-Australia collaboration in one or more of these sectors will prove to be feasible and advantageous to both.

So, Mr. Chairman, we see the Canada-Australia relationship as being in good shape. Our connections are extensive and close. We consult on many subjects both domestic and international and we see Australia as an important economic partner, both now and in the future. However, as I have said, I think that on the trade and investment front, we could do better.

To help expand this relationship and celebrate the centenary of the opening of our Sydney trade office, my colleague Roy MacLaren, the Minister for International Trade, will be leading a Canadian business delegation to Australia next February. This visit will coincide with a major trade and investment conference we are planning to hold in Sydney, February 13 and 14. The objective of the conference will be to highlight our trading and economic relationship and to identify additional areas of collaboration.

Mr. Chairman, let me now turn to Canada's relations with the Asia-Pacific region generally. As in Australia, there has been in recent years an increasing focus on the countries of the Asia-Pacific; and despite suggestions to the contrary, our membership in the North American Free Trade Agreement will not lessen Canada's interests in expanding trade and investment with the countries of the region. Trade is too important to the Canadian economy for us to ignore an area for such economic dynamism. Only Germany of the G-7 [Group of Seven leading industrialized] countries relies more on exports in its national income than Canada. Exports account for about a third of our GDP [gross