

The competitive environment in China is fierce, and my government has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure a continuing and expanded role for Canadians there. Canadian business is ably represented by trade commissioners at our posts in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, a resource with which I am sure many of you are familiar. We are also seeking to raise the competence of Canadian business in Asia through such programs as Pacific 2000, which funds Asian business programs, language training and key sectoral strategies in partnership with industry associations.

Both the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Export Development Corporation (EDC) will continue to work closely with our private sector to enhance their export initiatives in China.

Through our government's material support for important China-focused organizations such as the Canada-China Trade Council and the Asia Pacific Foundation, we are trying to foster a "team Canada" approach that combines a deeper understanding of the region with strengthened long-term relationships with key Chinese decision-makers.

Canada attaches a great deal of importance to our relationship with China and I am delighted I was able to invite Vice-Premier Zhu to Canada.

As an able political leader, he can freely discuss matters with me where we do not see eye to eye, while at the same time pursue a forward-looking agenda, whereby we can work more closely together to build a prosperous future.

Earlier today I discussed with Vice-Premier Zhu Canada's concerns about access for Canadian firms in the China market.

As in the past, Canada will continue to expand our trade and economic relations with China, in spite of other differences that may exist between us. China has been one of our most favored trading partners for years, and we do not see its most-favoured-nation status as something that should be manipulated to lever other objectives.

This would be contrary not only to Canada's interests but also contrary to the interests of the Chinese people, whose growing economy will, in my view, create fertile ground for increased pluralism and well being.

Most-favoured-nation status is a two-way street, and we expect from China that it will afford Canadian exporters and investors the very best treatment afforded to its other major trading partners.