

Ladies and gentlemen:

I am very pleased to join my colleague, John Manley, Premier Harris and Ministers Eves and Saunderson in welcoming this major investment announcement by Honda Canada.

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting with Honda executives both here and in Japan, especially President Kawamoto, to discuss plans for the expansion of Honda's Canadian operations. I know from those discussions that a great deal of thought, comparative research and planning went into the decision that we have gathered here today to welcome.

A key factor was Honda's positive experience during 10 years of manufacturing in Canada. Part of that success story is Canada's competitive business environment, including an adaptable and highly skilled workforce and the availability of dependable high-quality parts suppliers. And as Minister for International Trade I would not want to overlook Honda's recognition that Canada is a very good launching pad into the wider North American market and beyond.

We welcome investments of this kind because they contribute to growth in jobs and prosperity. Currently, we estimate that one in 10 jobs in Canada can be attributed directly to international investment.

These investments in Canada also lead to expanded exports abroad, including from Honda in Alliston. Indeed, approximately 15 per cent of total Canadian exports are directly linked to international investment in Canada's auto sector. Looking at our exports as a whole, more than half of them flow from the Canadian subsidiaries of international companies.

Another benefit is that such investments often lead to yet more investments, simply because other investors want to be where the business environment is favourable.

In fact, the announcement this evening may well lead to additional investment in Canada by Japanese, European and North American auto parts companies to supply the Alliston and other expanding plants.

I want to congratulate Honda on its sound decision, to thank you for choosing a Canadian location for your new plant, and to wish you continued success in Canada in the new year - and beyond!