

Minister Salolainen, Ambassador Vandenhoff, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As a Minister of the Canadian government, it gives me great pleasure to address this distinguished group and to reaffirm the strong bilateral ties that exist between our two countries.

I believe the agreements we signed today on double taxation and air services, will contribute further to the strengthening of our relationship.

As northern parliamentary democracies with similar geography and climate, Canada and Finland have much in common and much experience to share.

Canada and Finland are smaller countries living next to large neighbours who are significant trading partners for us.

I hope to profit by learning Finnish views on the impact of the changes sweeping Western and Eastern Europe, how Finland is adapting to them and seeing if we can identify how we can help each other take advantage of these market developments.

Canadians and Finns work closely together in such organizations as the United Nations, the CSCE, the OECD and the GATT. We have participated together in peacekeeping operations around the world.

Canada and Finland are both Arctic nations and thus share a responsibility for Arctic lands, resources and peoples. Canada was an early, enthusiastic supporter of Finland's call for circumpolar Ministers to gather and consider how best to protect the Arctic environment.

I am pleased to note the stage now appears set for such a meeting here in Finland next spring. You can be assured of continued Canadian support and cooperation in this important initiative.

On the trade side, our exports to each other are growing although the volume involved is relatively small given the complementary strengths of our two economies. It is my hope that our mission will stimulate considerable growth in the commercial relationship.

Finnish companies, however, apparently feel at home in Canada as over 80 of them have made significant investments there, creating employment for over 6000 Canadians.

Among OECD nations, Canada is one of the more dependent on trade.