

in-house expertise on China that Canadian companies are so fortunate to have?

As your new Minister for International Trade, I am totally committed to putting myself and the significant human resources of my department at your disposal to penetrate the markets of Asia-Pacific in general and those of China especially.

Our Ambassador, Fred Bild, as well as my senior team in Ottawa and colleagues from Beijing, are here today to share experience and knowledge and to learn of your needs for the future. As a former foreign service officer, I myself can attest first-hand to the dedication, skill and experience of the men and women who serve abroad, seeking to expand our overseas trade. I am eager to resume the mantle of a Trade Commissioner and to get out to the region as often as possible, in support of your efforts. Certainly, the People's Republic of China will be high on my list of countries to visit, and, when I meet with the Chinese Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation, Madame Wu, next week in Ottawa, I will indicate my desire to pay a return visit as soon as possible.

In reality, government can only do so much to promote exports to the Pacific. Companies and private-sector organizations, like the Canada China Trade Council, are the key to long-term success. When the Council was established in 1978, there was only a handful of Canadian firms competing in a limited market in China. Today, China is a market for a wide spectrum of goods and services, which encompass the entire range of Canadian capabilities. Canadian business needs the kind of specialized guidance and expertise, which membership in a bilateral trade council can offer. Along with today's opportunities, you face the challenge of refining your role, sharpening your tools and broadening your membership. The demand for support in the Chinese market has never been greater than today.

Ladies and gentleman, as a new minister, I pledge to serve the interests of Canadian exporters, but, at the end of the day, the public and private sectors will have to work co-operatively and pool their resources to achieve their common objectives. The markets of Asia-Pacific and that of China are full of promise and possibility, but I appreciate that they are not always easy to penetrate. It requires long-term commitment and perseverance. We have to develop a "Team Canada" approach, if we are going to enjoy success. Nowhere is this more evident than in a market like the People's Republic of China, where the competition is fierce and the field of play is not always a level one.

Our country has world-class expertise in so many of the areas where China and the countries of Asia-Pacific have tremendous needs -- be it in telecommunications, oil and gas, electrical energy, transportation, mining, medical, environmental or other