

Canada's Minister for International Trade, to India last October with representatives from over 50 companies served to heighten awareness and interest both in Canada and India of the opportunities that exist.

Since that time, provincial ministers from British Columbia and Ontario have visited India to promote Canadian commercial interests. And I draw to your attention the 35 Canadian companies represented with me on this visit.

While some of these Canadian firms are experienced in the Indian market, most are newcomers to this country. Many are small to medium-sized enterprise (or SMEs), which generate most of the new jobs in Canada, and which are the main target of our country's international business development strategy.

Canada and Canadian business have developed greater confidence in long-term engagements here. India's economic liberalization program and its emergence into the broader trading world have contributed to this increased confidence.

The transition has extensive implications for India as a nation and for the sustainability of India's economic development. While we recognize that even positive change can be difficult and that the benefits are not always immediately evident throughout society, Canada continues to strongly support the economic reform program and urges India to stay the course.

This is a message I am sharing with Indian ministers and others whom I am meeting during this visit.

I have every assurance that the forward-looking leaders of the Indian government and business community will continue to press ahead with economic liberalization. Further reforms, transparency and certainty about the rules of the game will be essential to sustaining international business confidence.

As we enter into this new and exciting period in our relationship, we want to capitalize on opportunities for greater Canada-India commercial co-operation.

India's continuing efforts to modernize its infrastructure - especially in the areas of power generation and distribution, telecommunications services, transportation, and environmental protection - present enormous challenges for both countries.

Canadian companies have great expertise in these sectors, which they have successfully marketed around the globe. I invite Indian counterparts to take advantage of this visit to make contact with the companies represented here with me from these sectors. Organizations such as the ICBC can help provide valuable links between Canadian and