

Challenges remain with us in market access. The barriers are more and more of a second-generation type: more connected to whether and how these economies are deregulated and less connected to tariffs and quotas at the border. Still, there is a need for a renewed and focussed effort to improve market access for Canadian exporters.

It is an incredibly competitive business environment. Yet the resources of government for all programs, including business development, are shrinking. We have to focus on services to business that concentrate on the most needed type of support, to the most appropriate clients (above all the SMEs), in the most promising sectors. Improved market intelligence is one of the main objectives of the current retooling of business development programming.

The Government's role will be more "strategic" and less "subsidy." We will work with business to develop attractive and innovative financing packages. We are working to improve co-ordination of federal programs and also with provincial programs to reduce duplication of effort and to convey more of a united front to Asia-Pacific customers.

Asia's highly charged, highly competitive environment probably tests effectiveness of business-government collaboration as no other region does. The essence of Team Canada is mobilization of all talents and all resources across Canada. Again, the Government will be there to assist, with the help of, among other things, the finest trade commissioner service in the world.

But again, resources are limited and our role must be as advocate and catalyst rather than as broker or subsidizer.

In closing, my message to you is to get involved. Export readiness is the business of all of us. We must meet the challenges of the Asian market and take advantage of the new partnerships Asian business provides. If you haven't already, join the Canadian Exporters Association; participate in the bilateral business councils for the various Asian economies; work with your local Chamber of Commerce. Work to enhance the profile of trade with Asia.

Work to acquire language and intercultural skills, but, in the meantime, think about engaging the help of what one study called our "hidden advantage" - the 1.2 million Canadians of Asian origin.

A good deal is worth a big effort; please join with me in making it.

Thank you.