

Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an evening of firsts. It is the first time I have had the privilege of welcoming my fellow Foreign Ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to this country. It is the first time those Foreign Ministers have been hosted together abroad by any individual country anywhere. And it is the first time Calgary has been able to extend its traditional warm welcome to a delegation of senior leaders from Southeast Asia, a part of the world that is of such increasing importance to Canada and Alberta.

That this event marks so many firsts is appropriate. That reflects the strong commitment of the Canadian government to help build a foundation of peace and prosperity within and across the Pacific which will benefit us all, whether on trade, or aid, or security, or the environment. What this is about is Canada's partnership with ASEAN -- a partnership for peace, a partnership for prosperity.

It was not many years ago that Canadians, including Albertans, regarded the countries of Southeast Asia as distant places, places of magic or places of conflict, but places far from our principal priorities and interests. That attitude is beginning to change, but it has to change even more. Because our future is increasingly a Pacific future, our prosperity is increasingly a Pacific prosperity and the peace we know and cherish will be increasingly affected by a stable peace in Asia. ASEAN is a key element of that peace and prosperity.

The achievement of ASEAN's members is part of a Pacific economic miracle which knows no equal in history. While the countries of Europe were building their armies and their arguments, the Pacific region was creating an economic miracle. That used to be known as the Japanese economic miracle. It is no longer just Japanese, it is the Pacific economic miracle and the countries of ASEAN -- Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand -- are playing their part.

The centre of global economic activity is shifting towards the Pacific, and it is shifting fast. That is of immense importance to Canada and to Alberta. In 1983, Canada started trading more across the Pacific than we did across the Atlantic. We expect our exports to the Pacific to grow by at least 50 per cent over the next 10 years. We depend more on trade with the Pacific than the United States does, more even than Australia.

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