

First of all I should like to thank each of you for getting up so early to be here this morning. Thanks also to the Asia Pacific Foundation for hosting - under the guidance of Mike Phelps and Bill Saywell - this breakfast this morning.

I'd like to welcome our Minister for International Trade, the Honourable Roy MacLaren, and our Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, the Honourable Sheila Finestone. A special welcome goes to Mr. Gordon Campbell, the leader of the opposition Liberal Party in British Columbia. Welcome also are our heads of mission from the Asia-Pacific region. Having visited with many of you during my first year in office, I can readily attest to the fact that you are representing Canada superbly in Asia.

This is a very important time to be working in the Asia-Pacific, and as our high commissioners and ambassadors are well aware, our government's focus on the region - culminating with the recent visit of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien - has all Canadians looking to the region.

Nineteen ninety-four was an eventful year for those of us dealing with the Asia-Pacific: it included visits to Canada by the Prime Minister of Thailand and ministers from Japan, China, South Korea, Indonesia, India, Laos and other countries. Going the other way, Mr. MacLaren, Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet and I criss-crossed the region working hard to promote Canadian interests there. Nineteen ninety-four was also the year of "Team Canada" led by Prime Minister Chrétien. Team Canada was a sort of awakening to the sheer scale of opportunities and to Canada's capacity to compete when the effort is made. Team Canada showed that we could pursue business opportunities. It demonstrated the advantage of working together: federal government with provincial government, business with government. And it proved that Canada can compete with the best in the world and win.

The key motivation for links with the Asia-Pacific is their impact on economic growth and job creation in Canada. To most of us in this room, this is obvious, but we have to be ready to express the potential for Canadians in tangible ways, for instance:

- the support that Asia-Pacific markets may lend to the future development of key Canadian sectors;
- the size and purchasing power of the Asian middle classes and the implications for Canada of value-added products and services;
- the position of Japan and other countries as holders of debt and providers of direct investment; and
- the emerging global role of the Asia-Pacific region in industrial innovation.

I am convinced that our government's focus on the Asia-Pacific - and our explanations to Canadians for that focus - is perhaps the best example to Canadians of our government's Red Book philosophy.