

Canada knows about this because we had a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Soon thereafter, we became part of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, with both the United States and Mexico. Soon we will be adding a fourth partner to this equation by bringing in Chile.

Free trade is the way of the future, and we commend your government for the bold steps already taken in bringing down the new deregulation and market liberalization package announced in May. We know how difficult it is, but we also know the benefits that can result.

Last November, before the official program of APEC began, Prime Minister Chrétien and I had breakfast with six of your government's cabinet ministers – Ministers Habibie, Sudjana, Taher, Ariwibowo, Sanyoto and Wardiman – and about 200 Indonesian and Canadian business people.

After breakfast, we witnessed the signing of almost \$1 billion worth of trade and investment deals between Canada and Indonesia. It was at that time that both the Prime Minister and I decided we really must return to this country – and soon. As you can see, I have returned only eight months later.

Indonesia has been an almost regular feature of my agenda:

Last December, I met with the Research and Technology Minister, Dr. Habibie, and the Communications Minister, Dr. Haryanto, when they were visiting Canada.

In May, I met your Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Alatas, at a conference in Vancouver hosted by Canada for consultations with all the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] foreign ministers in preparation for the G-7 Summit held in Halifax.

I also met your Investment Minister, Mr. Sanyoto, in Vancouver as he was leading a cross-Canada investment mission of 50 Indonesian business representatives.

And in June, I met the Religious Affairs Minister, Mr. Taher, when he paid an official visit to Canada.

Also earlier this year, Canada's Finance Minister, Paul Martin, and our Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women, Sheila Finestone, visited your country.

These high-level government-to-government visits demonstrate the growing and deepening links between our countries and the increasing interest our respective governments are according this relationship.

And there are other ways we are building links.