

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to the Canadian Exporters Association. My department has had a long and cooperative relationship with you and I hope we can continue to build on that tradition. I recognize and appreciate the significant contribution of my predecessor in this portfolio - Ed Lumley. I know you will join me in wishing him equal success in his new responsibilities. As Minister responsible for industrial and regional economic development, he will continue to take a great interest in trade policy and in export promotion - and thus in the activities of the CEA. I am determined to maintain a high priority in cabinet for trade issues and will look to you for support and counsel in the months ahead.

You need no explanations from me about the importance of trade to the Canadian economy and about the significance of exports in preserving and developing the most precious commodity of all these days - jobs. Exports were estimated to account for nearly 1.2 million jobs in Canada in 1981 and, contrary to economic conditions generally, the numbers on trade are growing. You live with the fact that few other countries are as visibly dependent on external trade for the development of their economy and you are responsible for our continuing success in trade. Equally, you will be first to agree with me that we need to do more and we need to do better to ensure that our stake in trade is sustained and expanded in an increasingly difficult and much more competitive world environment.

I am sure there are those among you who wonder what will be the approach and prejudices of a new Minister of Trade. With every new Minister there is naturally some concern as to whether a change of emphasis or the development of new initiatives will affect the Government's commitment to exports. It may, therefore, be appropriate for me to share with you my thoughts as I assume this task.

Let me say at the outset that I believe the greatest enemy of business confidence is uncertainty. Politicians don't always realize that commerce performs incomparably better in an atmosphere of predictability and stability. I want to contribute to this kind of atmosphere and look to your help. I recognize the importance of consultations and will seek to consult as frequently and with as wide a range of interests as possible. I look forward, in particular, to working closely with the Export Trade Development Board and your association - in order to ensure that our efforts complement one another.

I want you to know that twenty years in public life, including eight years as Premier of one of our provinces, has taught me well the prime importance of the private sector in successful business enterprise. That is not to say the role of Government in trade is not important. It is! However, the role of Government must be