

I am pleased to welcome you to Montreal for the spring 1992 meeting of the World Trade Centres Association, and I am grateful to you, Mr. President, for so graciously extending your invitation to my guests in Montreal, Ambassador Hills and Secretary Serra. I am delighted to be associated with the official inauguration of the city's new World Trade Centre. These impressive surroundings are in keeping with the important role the association has played in Montreal for many years now.

The Montreal offices of both government portfolios for which I am responsible -- International Trade and Industry, Science and Technology Canada -- will be moving soon to the World Trade Centre. Our International Trade Centre has worked closely with yours in Montreal in the past, and the relationship will only be enhanced once we are sharing the same address.

The World Trade Centres in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, and most recently Ottawa, link members here with those at your Centres in some 50 other countries. Your mixture of promotional, consultative and educational activities is an important contribution to a stronger international trade environment. You are playing a pioneering role in developing new and innovative approaches to trade in today's global marketplace.

Members of the World Trade Centres Association are clearly aware of the fundamental importance of trade to economic growth and prosperity all over the world. Canada's high standard of living and enviable social programs are based, to a significant extent, on trade. Canadians earn 25 per cent of their income from trade -- more than two and one half times the comparable figure for the United States and twice that of Japan. Among the Group of Seven (G-7) countries, only Germany racks up a larger portion of its gross domestic product through the buying and selling of goods.

With 27 million people, Canada ranks 31st in population, but our economy is the eighth largest in the world. And our per capita income is the second highest of all industrialized economies. One of the reasons for this has been our outstanding trade performance. During the eighties, for example, Canadian exports grew at an average annual rate of 5.1 per cent in real terms. That was a full two percentage points faster than the economy as a whole. Canadians rely on trade to maintain and increase their prosperity. We must continue to look for and develop our markets worldwide. It is vital, therefore, that we pursue an activist trade policy.