

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today.

Today's program is one of more than 150 events that will take place across the country during export trade month. They are all important, but this one is very special. The presentation of the Canada Export Awards is national recognition of those companies that best embody one of Canada's national objectives: better export performance.

For you as exporters, trade means business. For Canada as a whole, trade means growth, and growth means jobs. The economic well-being of all Canadians depends on our ability to sell our products and services in the markets of the world.

Last year, we exported more than 112 billion dollars worth of goods and services. Nearly a third of Canada's gross national product and three million jobs in our country depend on those sales.

But as those of you know who are out in the markets of the world, it's a jungle out there. We must cope with rising protectionism. New competitors, often from newly industrialized nations, are showing up all the time. Buying habits are changing as technology makes its advances on the market. Yesterday's products may not sell tomorrow. The cost of our products abroad goes up and down with the value of our

dollar. And what all this means to Canada is that we must be aggressive, we must be inventive, and above all we must be competitive. Our standard of living depends on it.

That is why I'm so pleased to be here today.

I'm happy to be able to report that the selection committee for this year's export awards found its task extremely difficult. The calibre of the nominees was higher than ever before. I'm also pleased that, although the committee was not operating under instructions to spread the awards around, the winners represent many industrial sectors, small and large enterprises, and every region in Canada. That speaks well for Canadian business.

The criteria for the awards are demanding. A firm must demonstrate significant achievement in export marketing, in terms of sales, financing or promotion of export trade. These achievements are measured by increases in sales over the three most recent fiscal years, by success in penetrating new markets, and by success in introducing new products into the world market. Additional factors assessed include the level of Canadian content, the range of markets where sales are made, the retention of market share in the face of strong competition and the ratio of a firm's