



Statements and Speeches

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THE CHALLENGE OF EXPORTATION

Address by the Honourable Pierre De Bané, Minister of State for External Relations, to the Montreal Chamber of Commerce, February 23, 1982

...You are all aware that Canada has long been a major exporting nation. Now that we depend on exports for some 31 per cent of our gross national product (GNP), we are confronted daily with the challenge of an increasingly competitive world. With the slower growth rates that are occurring in their economies, our major trading partners will also be looking increasingly to exports as a solution to their problems of insufficient capital investment, high employment and inflation. In light of these realities, I now want to talk to you about a challenge that we all must face — the challenge of exportation.

I do not intend to overwhelm you today with an exposition replete with statistics, But I hope in these few moments to give you something of a heightened sensitivity toward this aspect of Canadian life. I would like to kindle an awareness in you of the enormous potential that needs only to be developed. I have just returned from North Africa — Morocco and Tunisia to be specific — where I travelled with a large delegation of Canadian businessmen and chaired two bilateral commissions. In the course of our discussions, I observed that the governments and businessmen of these countries were desirous of cultivating more extensive trade relations with Canada. They are already familiar with the quality and excellence of our products and services, but some of them have pointed out that the Canadian firms should show more perseverance in developing these trade relations abroad.

Our reputation has paved the way for us. We are well thought of, not only in Africa, but throughout the world. What are we waiting for then? In this world of new and increasingly dynamic and capable competitors, we cannot seriously expect business contracts and connections to materialize without a greater measure of zeal, persistence and imagination on our part. Could it be that we need to make a more dynamic approach and to find a greater motivation to export?

Trade surplus

A favourable element in Canadian economic developments in 1981, particularly in light of the downturn in world-wide economic activity, was the achievement of a large merchandise trade surplus of \$6.5 billion. This surplus was much higher than had earlier been anticipated and compares favourably with the all-time record surplus of \$7.8 billion recorded in 1980. The increase of 10 per cent in 1981 and 17 per cent in 1980 in our exports exceeded the growth in the GNP over these years. Exports therefore are performing better than the economy as a whole.
