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specific trade objectives. We believe that concerted, open and full consultations are essential requirements for preparing for any trade negotiations.

CanadExport: The Department will have a busy agenda in 1999 with important initiatives such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas. What are your key objectives for 1999 with regard to the FTAA? What key message would you like to give to the Canadian private sector?

Minister: As the Chair of the initial phase of the FTAA negotiations, Canada is spearheading the process, which, when successfully completed, will give Canadian companies clearer ground rules and increased access in markets throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The goal is to reach a single, comprehensive free trade agreement among the 34 countries of the hemisphere, which is one of the fastest-growing markets in the world. But it's important for the business community — as well as all Canadians — to stay engaged in the FTAA process. The fifth Americas Business Forum, which will be held in Toronto, October 30-31, is an ideal opportunity for the private sector to make a significant contribution. Following this, on November 1 and 2, Canada will host the FTAA Trade Ministerial Meeting.

CanadExport: Minister, you have indicated that the United States market is a high priority for you. Could you tell our readers why?

Minister: Our unique relationship with the United States cannot be overstated. We're each other's best customers, and since the free trade agreement in 1989, two-way trade has more than doubled — over \$1 billion in trade crosses our border every day. There is still tremendous potential for Canadian companies, SMEs in particular, to do even more business in the U.S. It makes sense for new exporters to start off in a market that is relatively close to home and has similar business practices. It is also an opportunity for our companies to gain valuable exporting expertise before going global.

CanadExport: What types of initiatives and programs do you and the Department have in place to help exporters take advantage of these opportunities in the United States?

Minister: Through our Embassy, consulates and network of trade commissioners throughout the United States, the Department offers a broad range of tools to help Canadian business, including the very successful New Exporters to Border States (NEBS) and NEBS Plus business development missions. And, a wealth of information on the U.S. market is available on our Internet Web site and through our publications, the latest being "The U.S. Connection," a new feature in the Department's trade newsletter *CanadExport*.

CanadExport: While the U.S. is obviously a high priority, what can you say to firms that are looking at higher-growth, yet riskier markets?

Minister: I would encourage them to look at any market that has potential for their products or services. As long as you're properly prepared, you can cash in on a great many opportunities that are opening up every day in emerging markets all over the world. But you don't have to assume all of the risks. We've got a lot of good mechanisms in place to help exporters with financial and risk services — the Export Development Corporation and the Canadian Commercial Corporation, for example.

CanadExport: With the advance of globalization, trade and investment are now more closely linked than ever before. What are your thoughts on the investment side?

Minister: Foreign investment makes a significant contribution to our growth and prosperity as it brings technology-rich jobs, research and development, as well as talented people, to Canada. Worldwide growth in investment is far outstripping trade, yet Canada's share in global foreign investment has been dropping. I believe we've got to be more aggressive in going after investment, and marketing Canada as a high-tech economy with a well-educated workforce, a low-cost business environment, and preferential access to the NAFTA market. But we cannot do this alone — we need to work in

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