

We cannot and should not compete in products that are produced in low-wage countries where the level of education, of training and technology is much lower than ours. The challenges in today's global economy are difficult. Canadians instinctively know that. We have felt this in recent years -- particularly in the current recession, but even before that.

As someone from Calgary once put it to me, as Canadians, we lived for our first 100 years on our resources, the next 20 years on our credit, and now we have to live on our brains, our ingenuity, our hard work and our imagination.

I know that some believe that greater competitiveness means lost jobs. But in fact, the reverse is true. Greater competitiveness means more jobs. Being competitive means smarter jobs, more skilled jobs, and greater investment in technology to give people better tools to work with.

Being competitive lets us trade. Trade also makes us more competitive. Competitiveness and trade are not add-ons or optional extras for the Canadian economy. They are at the core of any modern economy. They make an economy modern. They make it succeed.

That is not argument or ideology. That is reality.

Nor can anyone deny that the Canadian market is small -- larger than many, but small compared to our main competitors. Twenty-six million people cannot sustain a prosperous economy in the modern world by selling only to themselves.

And this brings me to tell you about the first of a number of overseas trade missions that I intend to undertake as an essential part of my new responsibilities.

Less than two weeks after taking over as Minister for Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade, I had the singular opportunity to lead a trade delegation consisting of some 40 of the best and the brightest of Canadian industry to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to promote Canadian trade with that region.

Without question, I believe this was a major step forward in broadening an already significant trade relationship with countries that obviously hold Canada in high regard. We were warmly received by two Heads of State and the leading Ministers in each country we visited, and I learned that Canadians face an enormous pool of good will as a result of our participation as a leading Coalition member in the Gulf crisis. At a lunch in our honour in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, no fewer than four Cabinet Ministers joined to welcome us; this was a signal not only to