

NAFTA becomes bogged down in politics or procedure — and if the path to future expansion in the western hemisphere remains obscure — we risk losing the advantages that would surely accompany a bold, sweeping initiative in which both North and South join.

Where does this leave Canada and indeed the Atlantic region? In a sense, Atlantic Canada is a microcosm of the kind of economic challenge that our country as a whole must face. As a small, specialized economy, we must export to survive. As an open economy highly dependent upon exports, we must take an active role in building — and extending — the kind of rules-based structures that will ensure our economic security and offer our companies, especially the small and medium-sized, the opportunities to seek profitable joint ventures abroad.

As one contemplates an ever changing international economic landscape — the reduction of trade barriers, the integration of markets, the globalization of investment — it becomes increasingly clear that Canada must continue to push its frontiers outward or risk being left behind. The opportunities are there, in the full implementation of the mandate of the new World Trade Organization and in the Asia-Pacific region in the emerging forum of Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation. In the western hemisphere, the opportunity is immediate. Chile may seem a long way from Halifax; but in a curious and largely unforeseen way it represents a gateway to our collective future.

Thank you.