

I am delighted to have been invited again to the CEA's annual dinner.

In this era of increased global competition, partnership between the private sector and the government is essential to success in international markets. This partnership is the essential ingredient that will enable us together to face increasingly severe international competition.

To be effective, this partnership requires a positive, constructive attitude, and that has been the hallmark of the relationship between the CEA and the federal government.

This year, we are celebrating the CEA's 50 years of outstanding service to the Canadian exporting community. We are also here tonight to note the appointment of your new president. I am sure that Mark Drake will lead your association into a second half-century of advancing the interests, goals and values of Canadian exporters. I understand he is out of the country at the moment, but please let him know that my officials and I look forward to working with him.

I would also like to take a moment to reflect on the remarkable career of Jim Taylor and his inspiring contribution to the CEA. Jim was a dauntless crusader for exporters, both as a trade commissioner for 30 years and as head of your association. As CEA president, he made sure that exporters' concerns and opinions were always known to our government. His energy and intellect will be missed in the exporting community and in government.

For 50 years, your association has been working to improve the climate for companies involved in the international markets. During these 50 years, we have witnessed a veritable explosion in international trade.

As we strove to create an environment where Canadian exporters could realize their potentials, the CEA showed strong support for the government's trade policy initiatives when that support was needed most. I am talking about the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the U.S., the negotiations for a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the completion of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN).

I know that many of you share my concern over the many delays in the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. Canada, and the whole world for that matter, need the economic impetus that a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) would bring. While there are still storm clouds over the negotiations, all parties involved are aware of the need for this Round to succeed.

At a January 19 trade negotiations committee meeting in Geneva, we felt there was a clear sense of determination -- a recognition by all participants that the end is in sight and is achievable. U.S. President Clinton's recent announcement that he will seek an extension of the fast-track authority is another reason for hope.