

to put Canada in a position to face the challenge of change. To open up our economy, to make it more competitive, more attractive to investment, and to provide more jobs.

Back in September, when I became Minister for International Trade, one of the first things I did was to ask to see a copy of the document outlining Canada's national trade strategy. Now, I must say that our trade officials have always been very helpful, but they couldn't give me the document. Because it didn't exist. It came as something of a surprise to me, but Canada had no national trade strategy. We had a commitment to the GATT, but no national strategy. For the past I-don't-know-how-many years, Canada has been shooting from the hip, riding out like a posse in the night to try to chase down the latest villain. We didn't always get our man.

We're trying to change that, and I think most of you here are aware of most of what we've been doing. But let me summarize briefly. We have been meeting with the provinces at all levels -- officials, trade ministers and first ministers -- to work out together the elements of a national trade strategy. One that would coordinate our efforts overseas, agree on our priorities back home, and provide our exporters a solid and up-to-date information base on opportunities throughout the world.

Another initiative was a Canada-wide trade promotion exercise, "Marketplace '85", which took place all over Canada during the month of March. The object was to let small and medium-sized companies know how they might get into the export markets, or improve their performance if they were already exporting. And to that end, we brought 105 Trade Commissioners back from their posts abroad and put them one-on-one with business people. Altogether, they talked to nearly 7,000 business people, many of whom had never exported before.

We're also preparing for the eighth round of multilateral trade negotiations under the GATT. There has been some question on when the next round would start, because not all the GATT signatories were agreed on the usefulness of another round. But there was unexpected progress made at the recent OECD meeting in Paris, and it now looks like the negotiations could begin next year.