

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted to be in the free and Hanseatic city of Hamburg this evening, this beautiful and bustling city of Hamburg. Hamburg has been one of Europe's major centres of industry and trade for eight centuries, which is a span of history that most of us in Canada cannot readily comprehend. It is certainly appropriate that my first visit to the German Federal Republic as Minister for International Trade begin here.

I am also honoured to have been invited to address you, the members of this prestigious club. It is my understanding that I am the first Canadian trade minister to speak here since the Ubersee Club was founded, during the Weimar Republic in 1922. I know something of your tradition, of serving as a forum for "discussions that transcend national borders, political differences and philosophies" and I will attempt to direct my remarks accordingly -- although I confess I am not aware of any significant political differences between us.

Indeed, we have a great deal in common, and I propose this evening to explore with you how we may further enhance the strong commercial bonds that already exist between us. For Canada, West Germany is a valued friend, ally and partner in a complex and changing world.

Let us take a look at the scope of our partnership. The Federal Republic is Canada's fourth largest trading partner, and I am happy to say that the volume of trade, after two disappointing years, has rebounded strongly. During the first seven months of this year, our total bilateral trade was up by a third over the year before, and you will be happy to hear that your exports to Canada rose by 47%.

You are also our third most important source of foreign direct investment. Altogether, some 1,500 Canadian companies are owned or controlled by German parents. Names such as Volkswagen, BASF, Bayer, Deutsche Babcock, Kloeckner and Preussag are very familiar to us -- although we may not always pronounce them properly -- and two important new projects have recently been started: a joint venture between MBB and Fleet Industries in the helicopter industry in Ontario, and the Key Lake uranium mine in Saskatchewan, the largest open pit uranium mine in the world. There are also 100 or so Canadian companies with interests or subsidiaries in Germany.