

It's an exciting night for Canadian exporters -- a group to whom this nation owes much.

It's an exciting night for the Canadian Exporters' Association [CEA] -- your 50th anniversary celebration. May you have 50 more.

Of course, it's an exciting night for the 10 winners of this year's Canada Export Awards, and it's an exciting night for me.

I've spent most of my life in and around the business and export community, as an exporter, as an academic, and in government. I know how hard it is to step beyond the familiar, to reach out into export markets, to take risks -- win or lose. And I know how tremendously satisfying it is when you succeed. I'm delighted to help you celebrate that success here tonight, and congratulate you for it.

In the five months I've held the International Trade portfolio, I have been fortunate to participate in some moments of real accomplishment for Canada -- for example, when we struck a deal on market access with our Quad partners in Tokyo; when we finally resolved the beer dispute with the United States; and when we completed the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] side agreements on labour and environment.

Tonight I find myself at another high point in this portfolio, because in a few moments, I will have the honour of saluting some people who have earned special recognition for their creative efforts in selling Canadian goods, technology and services in foreign lands over the past year.

I feel I am presenting these Export Awards on behalf of all Canadians, because we all have a stake in your success.

As Prime Minister Campbell said on August 27, exports are our life line and our lifeblood. Drawing the direct connection between exports and their importance for all Canadians, she told it like it is: "The best job policy for Canada is a good trade policy."

When you consider that a quarter or more of Canadian jobs are directly related to exports, when you figure that each new billion dollars of exports generates around 15 000 jobs, it's clear why all Canadians have a stake in your export success.

And your success is a matter of record. Trade figures for the first six months of 1993 show our merchandise exports at \$87 billion -- up 15 percent from the same period in 1992; up 21 percent for our exports to the United States.

While we have done well, you and I know that as a nation, we haven't always been as bold and aggressive about exports as we could be -- as we need to be.