

The fact that we have a healthy trade balance at the moment should not lull us to sleep. If we are going to maintain our standard of living, let alone improve it, we're going to have to do better as a trading nation. We're going to have to sharpen our competitive edge.

The long and short of it is that we must take a hard look at our exports.

In our six months in office, this government has been moving rapidly to improve Canada's trade performance.

We have undertaken two major export promotion campaigns, including last month's Marketplace '85, which brought Trade Commissioners back home from their posts abroad to meet with potential exporters.

We are working actively with Provincial Trade Ministers to work out a national trade strategy.

Trade was a very important part of the First Ministers Conference in Regina, and, as you know, it was a vital part of the Quebec City Summit Meeting between Prime Minister Mulroney and President Reagan. As you probably know, I have been charged to work with the U.S. Trade Representative on the specific task of establishing a bilateral mechanism to chart ways to reduce or eliminate impediments to trade between our two countries. We have all of six months to report.

The other major initiative we have taken is what brings me here today. On January 29th, the government issued two discussion papers -- one on Export Financing, which is of a somewhat technical nature, and the other on How to Secure and Enhance Canadian Access to Export Markets.

Both of these papers are available here today, and I have to tell you that the access paper has been going like hot-cakes. We've had orders for more than 20,000 copies and the paper is now in its third printing. I expect to be approached any day now by the Book of the Month Club.

For those of you who haven't seen it, let me give you a quick digest.

The paper opens with a description of the international trading environment -- which is somewhere between a swamp and a jungle -- and then considers how we can survive in it.