

I want to thank the Canadian Export Association, APEC and Dalhousie's Centre for International Business Studies. I can't think of a more appropriate place to conclude Canada Export Trade Month than this beautiful seaport city. Halifax has been in the export business for a little while longer than I've been Minister for Trade.

Nor can I think of a more appropriate time to bring people of your stature together in this trade conference. Canada is facing a host of trade policy issues of great complexity and fundamental importance to our well-being. The international environment is undergoing rapid change. It is intensely competitive, more so than it has ever been. To put it bluntly, Canada is at an economic cross-roads. There is no risk-free course, but we must choose which way to go.

We must, in other words, begin a dialogue to forge a new consensus on the economic directions Canada will take. I would like to launch that dialogue tonight, by inviting you -- as exporters, bankers, labour leaders, scholars, officials and concerned Canadians -- to become actively involved.

The basic principles which will underlie our trade strategy have been set out by my colleague, Joe Clark, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs. Let me restate them. There are four.

The first is to resist protectionism, and keep trade open.

The second is to put a new premium on making Canada internationally competitive, encouraging and supporting enterprise, investment and innovation.

The third is to pursue export opportunities, large and small, traditional or new, with renewed vigor.

And the fourth is to pull together more effectively, with a greater and more urgent sense of shared purpose than ever before. It is our intention to increase practical, working cooperation between the Federal and Provincial Governments on trade matters, as on other matters. We also intend to restore and develop the sense of team-work between the private sector and government.

These are our guiding principles. The challenge is to make them work amid the economic and political realities in which we live. This may sound a bit like asking the Christians and the lions to all pull together, but it can and must be done.