

I'm very happy to be here this morning. This is more than an ordinary occasion. Unless you've been out in the bush for the past few days, you know that the Government has decided to explore with the United States the possibility of opening bilateral trade talks. I think I can tell you something about that.

But I'm here for another purpose, as well -- to launch, here in the Sault, Canada Export Trade Month. Launchings usually involve breaking a bottle of champagne over the bow, but I'll skip that. I hate to waste good champagne. And we don't have a bow.

What we do have, in Export Trade Month, is a program of more than 150 events across Canada, events that highlight various elements of our export activities. So let me start there.

Export Trade Month is a cooperative program. It involves business people, educators and trade officials in various departments and agencies of the federal and provincial governments. This cooperation is evidence of the growing consensus in Canada that our future prosperity is dependent upon improving our export performance.

The thrust of the Export Trade Month program relates directly to these objectives. The spirit of cooperation is demonstrated here today by the Chamber of Commerce, the Export Clubs of Canada, the city and two different federal departments anxious to assist the business community.

We are attempting to raise public awareness across the country of the critical role played by export trade in our national economy. Something like three million Canadian jobs depend on export activity. Our message is that there is a direct economic relationship between export activity and economic health. We want that relationship to be understood by every Canadian.

We are also communicating with the business community -- in particular, the small and medium sized business enterprises which provide the majority of jobs in Canada -- to make them aware of the opportunities that exist in the international marketplace.