

Canadian designers, manufacturers and retailing firms to develop matching and complementary product lines to meet broad demands from U.S. and European customers.

The Government of Canada sees the funding of this campaign as a strategic investment in a highly competitive sector. It is intended to make the sector even more successful as it adjusts to a larger, more competitive marketplace. The federal government's investment in the Fashion Apparel Sector Campaign is one of the ways we are following through on our commitment -- outlined in last December's economic statement -- to invest in partnerships to build industrial competitiveness.

As many of you know, the federal government established the Prosperity Initiative nearly 18 months ago and asked a private sector-led steering group to build a consensus on how to meet the challenges posed by an increasingly competitive global marketplace. The action plan this steering group produced focuses on measures to build competitiveness through the application of technology and innovation. It urges action to improve the effectiveness of education and training. The plan also suggests ways in which every Canadian can have the opportunity to participate fully in the nation's economic life.

I am struck by the degree to which the focus of the sector campaign designed by this industry parallels very closely many of the recommendations in the Prosperity Action Plan. Your focus on training, innovation, inter-company and labour-management co-operation, expanding into new markets and strengthening the role of trade associations all demonstrate this parallel. This industry is showing the way that many others must follow if Canada is to remain prosperous.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to make the launch of this key sectoral campaign official.

*(Minister proceeds to the table to sign the letter of offer.)*