

- growing importance of knowledge-based rather than resource-based industries.

These factors are also the basis of the profound global challenges facing Canada, and your industry.

In the last decade, while other nations have made significant improvements in productivity, Canada's productivity growth has stalled, despite strong investment by industry over the past six years. As a result, we have lost ground -- a recent Canadian Manufacturers' Association study ranked Canada's competitiveness last out of the Group of Seven nations.

We have been slow in developing and applying new technologies. The World Economic Forum Report ranked us 17th out of the 24 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in adapting technology. Business has invested too little in skills training for its employees -- we were ranked a disappointing 20th. We have been slow to meet some of the challenges of a global marketplace -- we ranked 16th in terms of international orientation. And perhaps most important of all, the key players in our economy -- governments, labour and business -- have had great difficulty working together towards common goals.

In 1984, our government set out an agenda to create an environment in which industry could respond to new competitive challenges. The Agenda for Economic Renewal has been at the heart of government economic policy since 1984.

This Agenda includes deficit reduction, deregulation and privatization, and the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, which secured and enhanced market access to our largest trading partner. The Going Global initiative, that has opened markets in Europe and the Pacific Rim, is also a part of the Agenda which continues to expand its trade horizons through the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement. The Agenda for Economic Renewal has gone a long way in providing a fiscal and regulatory environment for business to grow. These are among the initiatives that have been taken to provide Canada with the tools it needs to compete.

The seafood and marine products industry knows, perhaps better than most, the rigours of the global marketplace. You have learned them as you have developed markets for the over 80 per cent of your production which is exported. However, this also means your industry, like the rest of Canada's economy, must be especially responsive to the international marketplace.

Today, international trade accounts for over 25 per cent of our gross domestic product. It places us seventh out of approximately 168 nations worldwide in total trade, even though