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SPEECH FOR
THE HONOURABLE GERALD REGAN
MINISTER OF STATE FOR
INTERNATIONAL TRADE

PRESENTATION OF
THE FIRST CANADA EXPORT AWARDS
AT THE CEA 40TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
OCTOBER 17, 1983
CHATEAU LAURIER HOTEL
OTTAWA, ONTARIO

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Thank you Mr. Soubry.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is most appropriate that the platform for the presentation of the first Canada Export Awards is such an auspicious event as the Canadian Export Association's (CEA) 40th Annual Convention.

The CEA has been known over the years as an Association dedicated to the promotion of Canadian exports and to the representation of the interests of Canadian exporters and those serving the export sector. On the occasion of your 40th Anniversary there is no doubt in my mind that these goals are being pursued by the Association and its members with more vigour than ever.

Your 40th birthday is a landmark event and so is tonight's presentation of the first of what I know will be a long series of presentations of the Canada Export Award.

Because of the convergence of these noteworthy events, the Prime Minister has asked me to convey the following message to you:

"I would like to congratulate the executive and members of the Canadian Export Association (CEA) on the occasion of the association's 40th Anniversary. The CEA has long been a vigorous proponent of government measures and private sector initiatives to support and expand Canadian exports. Few associations can look back over their history the way the CEA can and see a long record of service to Canada and Canadian industry. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the sound advice the government has received from the CEA over the years. I know that we and the Canadian exporting community may look forward to many more years of sound export counsel on trade issues from the CEA.

Il convient donc que la présentation des premiers prix d'excellence à l'exportation canadienne se fasse à ce moment-ci. Ces remises de prix, je l'espère, viendront chaque année souligner les efforts d'entreprises qui ont pris des risques et réussi dans un milieu extérieur très concurrentiel. Ayant personnellement favorisé les biens et services canadiens à l'étranger, je salue les entreprises canadiennes qui ont persévéré, qui ont affronté les défis des marchés étrangers et qui ont été encouragé, par leur succès à l'exportation, à présenter leur candidature.

A votre association et aux récipiendaires des prix de cette année, j'offre mes plus sincères félicitations."

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A few short days after assuming the Trade portfolio a year ago I had occasion to address your last annual meeting. At that time, I had scant knowledge of the importance of this organization, the vitality of its membership or the magnitude of your contribution to the welfare of the Canadian people.

I approach the task of tonight's address with greater awe and trepidation because of my enhanced comprehension of your ongoing contribution to Canada.

This is not to suggest that I am not happy to be here. That would be totally contrary from the truth.

I am delighted to have the occasion in the middle of export trade development month to pay tribute of the warmest and most sincere quality to this organization, its executive and to each of its members, all of whom enrich our country and support the standard of living of their fellow citizens by their efforts in the export markets of the world.

In the course of the past year, I have had the privilege of travelling in company of many of your members in trade missions to various parts of the world. I have had the occasion to observe their expertise in execution.

Beyond their individual efforts, I have been particularly impressed by the Canadian team approach whereby the members of a trade mission of disparate undertakings assist and advise each other providing a cross fertilization of expertise that enriches the overall sales effort and enhances the achievement of the mission.

In addition to those with whom I have travelled I have had the experience of being involved with many more exporters seeking solutions to problems or merely consultations on projects in my office.

I would like to believe that I have come a long road in my comprehension of your problems, needs, challenges and opportunities in the course of that year.

Tonight, on the occasion of the Export Awards, I salute you for every one of your members is worthy of recognition.

I have formulated some ideas of the directions government must follow to support you by trade promotion and to provide favourable conditions through the negotiations of trade policy.

I am confirmed in my long held belief that our path to success in the export markets is through an evangelistic adherence to the tenets of multi lateral trading rules.

I mentioned earlier my appreciation of the active support provided by the CEA to its members and the exporting community. A good deal of the credit for this vitality belongs with Tom Burns, your president of six years. Tom Burns, in a long and distinguished career in both the public and private sectors, has served the interests of Canada's exporting community in an exemplary way.

Tom, I know I am expressing the sentiments of all present in thanking you for your contributions to Canada's exporting community as President of the CEA and in wishing you the best in the future.

The exporting community will continue to need wise counsel if it is to have an opportunity to survive and thrive in the future. The international trade environment for the 1980s will be highly competitive. It will be characterized by an ever-increasing interdependence of national economies and a more rapid adaptation of new technologies and production techniques.

Looking back however we can see that 1982 was a banner year for Canadian exports. Our current account balance was in the black for the first time since 1973 and Canada increased its share of world trade to 3.7 percent while world trade in general contracted.

We can do even better and the growth of our exports is our surest path toward full employment.

Businessmen can only sell if the arrangements between countries for trade to flow are efficient and realistic.

The challenge to the world is to establish the fiscal framework within which developing countries can afford to buy the goods and services which the industrialized countries can offer.

For that to happen, protectionism must be controlled and bottlenecks must be removed.

For all of us, the further challenge is to adapt the changing methods and evolving markets.

As Minister of Trade, I consider you of the exporting community my first responsibility. Tonight I pledge my continuing efforts to the creating of the circumstances in which export business can best flourish.

We want the general public to understand both the importance of exports to our economy, and what we are calling the export/import equation, that is to say, if we want those imported goods which enhance our comfort and quality of life we must export to generate the earnings required to buy them. These are the key messages we want to get across during Canada Export Trade Month.

The presentation of the First Canada Export Awards by the government is the highlight of activities planned for this month. The presentation of these awards will become an annual event. I hope that the success of the firms we are honouring tonight will encourage others to enter the export arena and, for those already involved in exporting, to serve as an example of what can be achieved.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Export Trade Development Board and its Chairman, Roger Hatch, for bringing to our attention the need to publicly honour successful Canadian exporters. Their initiative and guidance were instrumental in bringing the Canada Export Award to fruition.

I would also like to thank the Award Selection Committee consisting of Jake Warren, Liisa Nichol, Keith Hendrick, Albert Deschamps, Claude Charland and Tom Burns, who even with their wealth and diversity of international trade experience, faced quite a challenge. Choosing 15 from the field of over 250 well qualified and deserving applicants I am sure was not an easy task. All of the firms showed very strong export performances.

For example, the annual growth rate of export sales of these companies over the past three years averaged 54 percent. Similarly their export sales averaged 70 percent of total sales in 1982. By any measure these firms have to be considered top notch exporters.

Applicants included firms from all regions of Canada and were distributed across the range of industry from large and medium manufacturers, small high tech firms, service industry firms, agriculture, fish and food processors, and small manufacturers.

The general criteria considered by the selection panel in assessing the comparative performance of the firms were: strong growth in export sales, the introduction of new products to the export market, the entry into new export markets, and/or outstanding service to the exporting community.

All demonstrated through their applications a willingness to undertake risk to achieve significant export results in a very uncertain international environment.

The firms which we are honouring tonight can be justifiably proud of their achievements but must realize that other Canadian firms can achieve similar success. In this spirit I would like those who are currently exporting to rededicate themselves to the expansion and reenergizing of their activities and those who have not entered the export arena to seriously consider its rewards.

Mr. Soubry, ladies and gentlemen that concludes my formal remarks for this evening. If you will excuse me for a moment I will move to the stage for the official presentation of this year's Canada Export Awards.