

STATEMENT DISCOURS

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Statement by the
Honourable James Kelleher,
Minister for International
Trade, at the Canada
Export Awards Ceremony

MONTREAL

October 8, 1985.

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today.

Today's program is one of more than 150 events that will take place across the country during export trade month. They are all important, but this one is very special. The presentation of the Canada Export Awards is national recognition of those companies that best embody one of Canada's national objectives: better export performance.

For you as exporters, trade means business. For Canada as a whole, trade means growth, and growth means jobs. The economic well-being of all Canadians depends on our ability to sell our products and services in the markets of the world.

Last year, we exported more than 112 billion dollars worth of goods and services. Nearly a third of Canada's gross national product and three million jobs in our country depend on those sales.

But as those of you know who are out in the markets of the world, it's a jungle out there. We must cope with rising protectionism. New competitors, often from newly industrialized nations, are showing up all the time. Buying habits are changing as technology makes its advances on the market. Yesterday's products may not sell tomorrow. The cost of our products abroad goes up and down with the value of our

dollar. And what all this means to Canada is that we must be aggressive, we must be inventive, and above all we must be competitive. Our standard of living depends on it.

That is why I'm so pleased to be here today.

I'm happy to be able to report that the selection committee for this year's export awards found its task extremely difficult. The calibre of the nominees was higher than ever before. I'm also pleased that, although the committee was not operating under instructions to spread the awards around, the winners represent many industrial sectors, small and large enterprises, and every region in Canada. That speaks well for Canadian business.

The criteria for the awards are demanding. A firm must demonstrate significant achievement in export marketing, in terms of sales, financing or promotion of export trade. These achievements are measured by increases in sales over the three most recent fiscal years, by success in penetrating new markets, and by success in introducing new products into the world market. Additional factors assessed include the level of Canadian content, the range of markets where sales are made, the retention of market share in the face of strong competition and the ratio of a firm's

export sales to total sales.

Meeting these criteria means, by definition, besting the international competition. This year's nominees -- not just the winners, but all the companies that were considered -- have proved that Canadians can compete and win in world markets. They have done precisely what it is we must do as a nation to maintain our prosperity. They set themselves tough goals and achieved them.

In the process, they have set a standard of skill and excellence which Canada must aspire to.

Our exporters, of course, have always been internationally competitive. You couldn't stay in the business if you were not. And in my view the export community should have a stronger voice in shaping national economic policy - not only trade policy, but the full range of our domestic policies which affect our ability to compete.

As a step towards this goal, the Government is establishing a permanent International Trade Advisory Committee. The Committee's immediate assignment will be to provide counsel to the Canadian negotiating team as it proceeds through our bilateral trade talks with the United States.

But it is a permanent committee. It will provide the same counsel to our negotiators during the next round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations -- which now looks like it will get underway next year -- and it will be consulted on all important trade matters affecting the country.

Let me tell you a little bit about the committee. It will be drawn entirely from the private sector. Its first chairman will be Walter Light, the chairman of the Executive Committee of Northern Telecom, which as you know is one of Canada's more successful exporters. It will be known by a bureaucratic acronym, ITAC, and loosely attached to it will be 20 or so sectoral advisory groups. They'll be called SAGITs, and their membership will also be drawn from the private sector, both business and labour.

We in the Government expect a great deal from the men and women who agree to serve in this structure of international trade advisory committees. They are going to work hard, and we are going to lean on them, often and hard, for advice. It is my intention, therefore, that the new advisory committee system will assume the mandate of the Export Trade Development Board as part of its own broad mandate.

I want to express my great appreciation to all the members of the Board, who have so willingly given us their time and advice. I have written to each of them to express my thanks and those of the government. But I would like to pay particular tribute here to Roger Hatch, the Chairman of the Board, who has made a special contribution to Canada's international trade -- as head of the ETDB and, before that Chairman of the Canadian Export Association, and, of course, as the author of the "Hatch Report" on trade development. Roger, we are in your debt.

Over the last year I have been pleased to implement a number of trade promotion initiatives. One small measure, which appears to have had large results and clearly met the requirements of the business community, was the establishment of a trade information centre in External Affairs. We call it Info Export.

This centre is staffed by several of our trade commissioners and their job is to provide information and advice to exporters and potential exporters throughout the country. Info Export is really the other end of a toll free telephone line. Small and medium sized firms across Canada pay nothing to obtain our assistance. In the year and six days since I opened Info Export, my trade commissioners have handled approximately 16,200

telephone calls. Let me give you the number. It's 1-800-267-8376, and our operators are standing by. Once again, the number is 1-800-267-8376.

Another trade initiative, and a major project for my department, was Marketplace 85. We brought back 150 trade commissioners from their posts around the world. They spent most of the month of March travelling through Canada. They met with more than 3,000 companies and conducted more than 9,000 interviews, one on one. I am particularly pleased with the results: more than 700 companies decided to go into the export business for the first time, and my trade officers are working with all of them to assist their international marketing activities.

I hope that we can be just as successful next March, in Marketplace 86. It is our intention to focus on the U.S. and Asia-Pacific markets in next year's program. Those are the areas in which we see the best prospects to increase our exports, and we are trying to assist. In the year and six days since I opened Info Export, my trade commissioners have handled approximately 16,200 telephone calls. Let me give you the number. It's 1-800-267-8376, and our operators are standing by. Once again, the number is 1-800-267-8376.

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We have many other projects also in the works.

To improve our competitiveness with other exporting nations, we're reviewing our present guidelines for concessional financing, particularly for CIDA projects, and for pre-investment financing. We're setting up special offices to seek out, and import, new technology that would make our industries more competitive.

We're beefing up our international marketing efforts in many areas. We are, for example, developing a computerized program to exchange information with the provinces on trade fairs, missions and trade visits abroad. This should be on-line on the first of the year. We're also introducing the computerized World-Wide Information Network to allow us to keep up to date on export opportunities abroad.

My officials are currently evaluating the results of various other trade initiatives, as well. Our basic concern is whether the initiatives result in additional export sales. I think that those in this room would agree with our criteria.

This has been a very active year for those of us involved with trade. But it may be nothing like the year to come. So fasten your seat belts and, Mr. Bergeron, let's get on with the Canada Export Awards.