

That is what the Canadians who were surveyed thought was the cause of interprovincial trade barriers: government inaction.

This morning, I have come to assure you that the period of inaction is over. We are moving, and we need your help to keep the momentum building toward a new era -- an era of free trade within Canada.

The Prime Minister and premiers agreed to implement the Intergovernmental Agreement on Government Procurement, and it came into force last April 1. It commits federal, provincial and territorial governments to open to all bidders any contracts for goods purchased by government departments valued at over \$25,000, covering some \$6 billion of procurement. The agreement includes provision for a dispute-settlement process and annual reporting by governments.

This is just a first step. We must build on the agreement so that it eventually includes all procurement of goods, construction and services by the Canadian public sector. What would such an agreement mean for business? It would mean fair and open competition for contracts that constitute billions of dollars of procurement.

For small business, it could mean relatively easy access to a vast new market. For large- and medium-sized business, it could give an incentive to expand into new markets in Canada, which they might otherwise not serve without this entrée. And for the consumer? It could mean more competition in the marketplace and more choice of quality Canadian goods and services. But aside from all these real benefits to business, the consumer and the economy, what would it mean for the taxpayer? It could mean significant savings of tax dollars because of more competitive procurement.

My provincial colleagues and I have established a Committee of Ministers on Internal Trade to help focus on the challenge ahead of us and to review what we have achieved.

We are now negotiating an Intergovernmental Agreement covering services and construction procurement. The next step will be to negotiate inclusion of Crown corporations as well as government-funded municipalities, universities, schools and hospital services.

Last March, the premiers and the Prime Minister directed that federal and provincial ministers were to complete the work of identifying, reducing and removing barriers to interprovincial trade by March 31, 1995. After decades of talking free trade within Canada, we now have an agreed target. The Intergovernmental Committee has agreed on a comprehensive