

THE PROSPERITY INITIATIVE

The modern world is one of rapid, even bewildering change. The future prosperity of Canada rests on our ability to confront the challenges posed by such change. While Canadians have successfully built a strong and prosperous country, the federal government recognizes that new approaches are needed to meet new situations and maintain that prosperity for future generations. In October 1991, Michael Wilson, Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade, announced a process of national consultation to seek a consensus among Canadians on goals and priorities. As Mr. Wilson stated, "Productivity is the heart of the issue and is essential to our prosperity. It supports our way of life; it puts food on our tables, schools and hospitals in our communities, roads across our great country and pay cheques in our pockets. But in order to be more productive, we first have to upgrade every component of our economy. And in order to do that, we have to learn to innovate; to work smarter and faster, instead of harder and longer."

Consulting the Country

The consultation process will be guided by a non-governmental Steering Group on Prosperity led by two distinguished Canadians, David McCamus, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Xerox Corporation of Canada, and Marie-Josée Drouin, Executive Director of the Hudson Institute of Canada. This group will consult with major national associations and meet regularly with federal ministers and their advisory groups. Equally important will be community consultations



Marie-Josée Drouin, Executive Director of the Hudson Institute of Canada, is co-chair of the Steering Committee on Prosperity.

Goals for a More Competitive Work Force

The key to future prosperity is competitiveness in the world economy. To remain competitive with other countries, Canadians must upgrade their skills and make increasing use of new technologies. The development of a skilled and adaptable work force is essential. Learning must play a greater role in the lives of Canadians and must be seen as a lifelong process. The government has proposed a number of 10-year goals as a basis for discussion. These include halving the adult illiteracy rate, increasing to 90 per cent the number of Canadians earning a high-school diploma or equivalent by age 25, quadrupling the amount of training provided by employers and doubling the number of students graduating in science, engineering and technology. These are ambitious goals, but Canada must be prepared for a world in which countries will increasingly compete on the basis of the skills of their labour force.

Prosperity is not an end in itself, but it is essential to ensure the achievement of goals that are important to Canadians — the maintenance of a clean environment, a vibrant culture, strong social programs, and interesting, well-paying jobs. A recent United Nations study ranked Canada second overall in quality of life. By launching this series of consultations with Canadians, the government has shown its determination to preserve that standard. Mr. Wilson expressed his confidence in Canadians' ability to meet the challenge. "I am reassured by the knowledge that when Canadians roll up their sleeves, the job gets done." ♦

and social action groups, as well as with the provinces, ensured the broadest possible consensus on the key issues for discussion outlined in these papers.

A Cohesive Strategy for Change

While these papers consider different topics crucial to continued prosperity, such as investment capital, trade policy and the creation of a unified domestic market, the government recognizes that addressing such topics individually will not achieve maximum results; all of these elements must be integrated into a cohesive strategy for change. This strategy, in turn, demands a revolutionary change in attitude. Canadians must understand that continued prosperity requires a new sense of partnership at all levels of society. Labour and management, for example, must realize that they can achieve their goals only through co-operation, not through confrontation.

permitting individual Canadians to bring forward their local and personal viewpoints.

The Steering Group will use the recommendations arising from all these consultations, as well as the reports produced by the provinces and other organizations, to produce a plan representing a national consensus while also taking account of regional and local needs. This plan is expected to be ready by the end of summer, 1992.

To stimulate discussion, the government issued two papers, "Prosperity Through Competitiveness," dealing with economic policy, and "Learning Well ... Living Well," dealing with education. Consultation with more than 60 business, labour, academic