

In the months and years to come, the Government of Canada will be helping more Canadians find ways to benefit from opportunities in the North American market.

Two weeks ago, I announced our Access North America program. This program acts on the recommendations of the Action Plan of the Steering Group of the Prosperity Initiative. The Action Plan urged the Government to make greater efforts to develop world markets.

We are doing this.

Access North America will help make the NAFTA work for Canadians. It will help Canadians display their products and services at a permanent trade centre in Mexico City, and it will help Canadians become better acquainted with the Mexican market through a program known as Newmex.

Yet what would my honourable friends opposite do? They would deny Canadians all the opportunities of this market. Some of them would tear up not just the NAFTA, but the FTA as well.

They have no vision of their own. They have no plan of action for Canada to play an important role in the global economy.

They counsel withdrawal. They don't want an active Canada, involved in the world. They want a catatonic Canada. They want Canada to stagnate as a backwater. Their policies would amount to planned paralysis or, worse, to the reckless abandonment of our largest trade relationship.

I wonder what the Opposition would be saying if we had not joined the negotiations for the NAFTA.

We would be under attack. We would be criticized by many of them for letting the United States march into the Mexican market while we sat passively to the side.

Many in the Opposition would undoubtedly have accused us of putting our industries at risk, of freezing them out of a prime commercial opportunity.

They would have charged us with undermining Canada's drawing power as a location for investment. They would have condemned us for refusing to defend Canada's interests.

But they can't do that, Mr. Speaker, because this Government did the right thing. We saw the future, and we wanted our rightful part in it.

The Bill before us today, when approved, will lead us to the twenty-first century.

One of the fundamental concerns of the next century will be the relationship between the developed and the developing world.