

We also want to hear from you as citizens. We want to hear from anyone who has a stake in the future prosperity of Canada -- and that includes us all.

This fall, the Government of Canada will be launching the Prosperity Initiative which will focus on five areas I have just outlined: learning, science and technology, investment, domestic markets and trade. Each raises questions. I want you to help me find the answers to those questions. A central part of the initiative is a three-part consultations program which will give all Canadians the chance to help Canada to meet the competitive challenges. Canadians expect those of us in government to listen, as well as lead. Whether it concerns our prosperity or our unity as a country, this government is demonstrating that it can do both.

Really, we can do no less. Because what is really under consideration here is not just the prosperity of an economy. At heart, what is at stake is the survival of our nation.

Canadians have a great stake in our continued prosperity. Improving our competitiveness means a higher standard of living. This, in turn, will provide us the means to be a caring society. A society that can secure the social programs we see as essential to our being Canadian. A society that can continue to support the arts and culture which helps us to understand ourselves. A society with the means, and the will, to make our education and technologies second to none in the world.

Some of you will know that a recent United Nations study ranked Canada as the second-best place to call home. I think, in our hearts, we all know that it is second to none. The Prosperity and unity agendas are aimed at making that a reality.

Your industry has shown us, and the world, that change and innovation can secure new prosperity. Your creativity in developing strategic partnerships to develop products and exploit market opportunities is a lesson for labour, government and other institutions in our society. You have demonstrated that co-operation and competition are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the capacity to do both is essential to adjusting to an ever more competitive marketplace.

Having seen your success, I hope that we can learn from it in building a plan of action to secure Canada's future prosperity. Together, we can pass a prosperous and united Canada on to our children. I hope that, at this Softworld Conference, you continue to build the partnerships that have meant so much for the prosperity of your companies, the vitality of your industry and the future prospects of Canada's economy.

Thank you.