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sector can be the engine of the economy and the basis for employment opportunities and growth.

This fundamental principle demarcates for those who may wonder what the difference is between the party in government in this country and the parties on the other side. Clearly the New Democratic Party tends to be more clear about what it stands for.

I have noticed over the last few months, particularly as we approach an election, that the Liberal Party offers many policies and alternatives. Some of them are conflicting one with the other. However, it seems to me it is all designed to attempt to offer to every Canadian whatever his or her heart may desire and not to concern itself whatsoever with the cost to the Canadian taxpayer for implementing whatever that program may happen to be.

For example, there is the one referenced in the motion before the House right now. I noticed that earlier today the Minister of State for Employment and Immigration asked a very specific, unequivocal and direct question of the member for North York. He was asked what exactly were the costs of implementing the program that he proposed. I noticed in his answer that he tended to waffle around, equivocate and never gave a specific answer as to what the cost in real dollars would be to implement this program.

I think it is important in looking at this whole issue to understand the philosophical differences that exist from one side of this House to another. In terms of the long-term goals obviously we all have the same goals. We want the best for all Canadians. We want employment opportunities not only for young people but for all Canadians who seek them. As long as there is one Canadian unemployed, that is one too many.

What is at issue on different sides of this House is the means by which we respond to that difficulty. As I have said before it is our view over here that it is not the function of government to simply employ people and put them on the payroll. Rather it is the function and role of government to create the environment in which economic development can occur and flourish.

For example, we see that it is the role of government to use its resources with respect to infrastructure development for transportation and to set in place a tax regime that allows the competitiveness of business to

improve. Not only can we compete effectively in our domestic market but we can compete in our export market.

It is interesting to note that this government has brought in some very historic changes to the tax structure of this country, all of which have been opposed by my hon. friends opposite who seem not be interested in improving the competitiveness of Canadian business.

The much maligned goods and services tax was presented to Canadians through obfuscation and hysterical talk as a whole new tax. There was neglect in mentioning that it replaced a hidden tax that in the last year it was in place taxed Canadians \$1.5 billion more than the GST did in the first year it was in place. These are the differences between that side and this side. It is the same with respect to the approach to trade.

• (1515)

Canada is an exporting nation. Our domestic market is not large enough to sustain the standard of living Canadians want. A quarter of the jobs in Canada result directly from our exports. Therefore we need export opportunities and to be competitive in order to export. This is the best means by which the government in the long term can provide employment opportunities for Canadians regardless of what their ages may be but particularly with respect to our young people. As we look ahead to the 21st century they will live in a society in which job opportunities in the productive sector will be directly dependent upon productivity and competitiveness. One of the things opening up the trade barriers has done is force Canadian companies to become competitive.

Those who would suggest that this is the wrong approach and that we should not do it need only look at the experience we had with cross-border shopping. Canadians will not even shop in Canada to buy goods that are uncompetitive in the pricing structure. They are looking for the best buy. If they have to go to Buffalo, Bangor or Seattle to get the best buy they are prepared to do it.

It is better that we reshape the Canadian economy in such a way that Canadian companies can compete not only abroad through exports but right in our own country. That is the thrust of the policies of this government.