

forward - requires thorough discussion and criticism. But given the undoubted need to change, I think it is fair to ask the critics to propose. At this stage in the life of our country, we need options, not just objections.

The desire for change that Canadians expressed on September 4 did not spring up suddenly last summer. It has been building for some time, and reflects a considered sense that old ways weren't working. The Government's mandate is to re-examine - and to change - attitudes that are out of date. The Government's responsibility is to use this exceptional national mandate to bring long-term opportunity and growth to our country.

The issues in the headlines are about famine and metric and journalists in foreign jails. The issue in the medium-term is how we encourage our economy to generate permanent and modern jobs. But the issue that will mean most to this particular country - with our wealth, and our regions and our ambition - is how we move on top of a changing world economy. It is a question of trade, and ability to compete.

In recent decades, other countries have outperformed us. It is more than an embarrassment. It is a threat to our ability to deliver the kind of future Canadians have come to expect. The new Government has a mandate to change old ways that didn't work. The country has an opportunity to take initiatives that can assure a strong future. In our judgment, that requires a closer working relationship with the United States. The form and terms of that relationship requires extensive, honest, self-confident debate.

Canadians have a lot to be proud of. We have things to say, accomplishments to boast of and experiences of our own that the world would like to hear. We have our own set of priorities, our own national purpose, our own vision of what the world should be, and our own values. Here lies the best answer to those who are concerned about our future as a distinctive nation on this continent. Our identity depends not on the quality of our fences, but on our eagerness to get out and compete and participate on the world stage. I think it makes a great deal of sense to start next door.