

We hear stories of farmers in Eastern Europe frustrated by no longer being told what to produce or what to charge for their products. We also hear stories of angry factory managers whose customers are no longer identified in advance and whose suppliers are no longer pre-ordained. Developing a democracy in twelve short months is daunting enough. But developing democracy and conducting an economic revolution at the same time is almost unimaginable. The dangers are clear. Democracy rejects repression. People are allowed to do what they want. But what if they don't want to do what a successful market place requires? What if they sit back and wait for the state to tell them how to be free? What if they resist the promise of profit and seek refuge in the predictability of a managed economy?

There is an even more serious danger. It is this. The period of economic transition will be difficult and, in some cases, frightening. Wages will drop. Prices will rise. Unemployment will soar. The danger here is that democracy, not the previous regime, will be blamed for the misery.

Canadians, properly, want to help transform Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We are sending Food Aid and technical compensation, rescheduling debt and encouraging trade and investment and participating fully in the new Bank for European Reconstruction and Development. And there is much more that the Canadian government and people must do. The point I want to leave with you about the East Bloc is that the changes have just begun, and the easy part is over. We must understand what is happening and make a long-term Canadian commitment to help.

Today, I want to focus on the set of economic opportunities these changes in the world offer Canadians and Albertans.

We are a nation which is trusted the world over. Our long history of straightforward diplomacy, our track record of adherence to agreements once negotiated, our tradition of being an honest broker have earned us a reputation to be cherished.

It is to be cherished not because it is honourable - although it is. It is also to be cherished because nations trusted in diplomacy are nations trusted in trade.