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The free trade agreement has helped Canada's trade position, as was noted by the Prime Minister earlier today in Question Period. We have a trade surplus with the United States that has jumped from \$11.4 billion to \$17.3 billion. That is a rise of almost 50 per cent. In the last three years, the value of Canadian exports to the U.S. has increased by almost \$8 billion. Someone can say that there is something wrong with the free trade agreement, but you sure cannot say it from the statistics indicating that we have had increased trade. When you have major trade with a major country like the United States, you want an agreement set in place so you have some trading rules. Anyone who would say that we are wrong in having a free trade agreement really would have to be questioned as to their business sense.

I see the opposition is coming around and being more and more supportive of us in the free trade agreement, especially the Liberal Party which is now saying that it is the right thing to do but it is going to do some tinkering with it. I am not sure what it is going to tinker with, but certainly it now understands that a free trade agreement is the right way to go and is agreeing with the government. We must carry on with all that work we have to do to expand upon that very important North American trading bloc which is so important to our country.

We certainly have entered into a prosperity initiative. We are looking at how we can be more prosperous and keeping Canadians prosperous. As you all know we lived for many years upon our natural resources and now of course it is very important that we move into the area of human resource development, recognizing and working with the development of all our people so that we are an even more productive country by taking advantage of our human resource development.

As you know, we have tabled two papers that are in circulation and are being worked with and are going to be reported upon. *Learning Well, Living Well* was produced by the Employment and Immigration department. It assesses a number of learning challenges that Canada must face and will face in this decade. The second paper

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is called *The Productivity Through Competitiveness*. It was prepared by ISTC. It focuses on five areas in which concentrated effort by Canadians will help us to compete more successively.

First, in learning, is the need to develop skills and creativity of Canadians. The second is innovation, including science and technology. The third need is to improve investment in Canada's enterprises and its innovation. The fourth component of this study focuses on the value of a strongly integrated domestic market as a base for Canadian business to compete outside Canada. The fifth area is the need to open and exploit new industrial markets throughout the world.

The steering committee that is working with all of this is conducting hearings. Certainly a government in place and a government with a continued mandate needs to take that information in and look at producing a presentation to the Canadian people as to how we should be carrying on in this area of learning and prosperity through competitiveness. We will be doing that as we carry on in the next year or so and earlier.

It is very important that this government have the opportunity in its mandate to put forth to Canadians how we should capitalize our human resources concerning the development of people, the education of people and the training and retraining of our people so that they are better able to take on and keep higher paying jobs and more highly technical jobs and to fill in the stream of what we call constant learning, in which our young people must move on into the work place with the basic literacy and numeracy skills to carry on with life-long learning which is so very needed and such an important part of what will happen in the future with our people.

Concerning our young people, we have a 30 per cent dropout rate. At one time there was a 60 per cent dropout rate in high school. The big difference is that the metal bashing jobs are gone. There are going to be higher and higher technical jobs, jobs requiring higher learning, and we must be ready for that. As the government, we are going to be moving our country into a place where that kind of ability will be enhanced.