

Canadians have faced critical choices in economic trade policy at many times in the past. The Canadian economy was built on trade, and throughout our history, Canadian jobs have depended on trade. A strong trade performance means a strong economy, and that means an ability to invest in the social and cultural institutions which let us be ourselves as Canadians. We want to keep Medicare and our other social programs. We want to keep the instruments and the symbols of our distinct Canadian identity. We want to assert our sovereignty in our North, and in our cultural expression, and in the quality of our life. To do that, we need secure jobs and steady growth. To have jobs and growth, we need trade.

However, in recent years, the international economic environment - the world we trade in - has changed profoundly. It is worth remembering what happened the last time there were profound changes.

Five decades ago the world was in the midst of the Great Depression. Countries everywhere called for protection of their own industries. Restrictive trade policies were followed and they made things worse.