

The second major reason that the trade agreement will increase our sovereignty is that nations assert their identity by reaching out in the world. By reaching out, not by hiding out. Nobody ever became known as a country by who they have hidden from. This country won't become known as an independent and strong nation because of the height of our wall, but we will be known by the distinctive nature of the contribution we have made internationally.

As I said I am the Minister responsible for foreign policy, and many of the fears that are raised by critics of this trade arrangement about Canada's independence have to do with how it would affect our foreign policy. Well, let me draw your attention to some of the distinctive characteristics of this country, as expressed by this Government, in the field of foreign policy. In a field that is supposed to be threatened by having a trade arrangement with the United States.

In September of this year, the Prime Minister of Canada, presided in Quebec City over an international meeting of a group called La Francophonie. That is for the forty countries that have in common the use of French. They have a lot of other things in common, but they have in common the use of French and that creates a world at one table. It has countries from different economic conditions, different colours, different traditions, gathered together because they have in common the use of French. Now, we have always spoken French in this country, ever since the country was visited by Europeans, but we haven't been a member of La Francophonie. And why is that? Because we were not able to put our own house in order in Canada in a way that allowed us to become part of the international Francophone community. We have matured enough at home, that we were able to demonstrate that distinctive Canadian quality at home, in a way that lets us play a part in that important international community. We have, through La Francophonie, through that distinctive community of countries who have in common the use of French, access to the kind of influence to those kinds of connection we didn't have before.

And it pays off, among other things, commercial. Let me not dwell on the point except to make the evident point. The United States of America wasn't present at the Conference of La Francophonie.