

years? It flourished and matured. As our economy has grown and our prosperity increased, so have the institutions that give us our unique Canadian identity: our health care and educational systems, our social insurance, our equalization programs. We have supported and fostered a vibrant cultural community. We have been able to build institutions and programs which reflect our own values and attitudes.

As our trade barriers have fallen, our confidence has risen, in ourselves and in our country. We have evolved and matured as a nation.

No one can say for sure whether the initiative we have taken with the United States will eventually bear fruit. It is possible, although I think unlikely, that the Congress will step in to block negotiations before they start. It is possible that when they start we find the Americans' price too high -- or they ours. We should not kid ourselves into believing that the negotiations will be easy. They won't. The Americans are hard bargainers. They are horsetraders, just like we are.

But nothing is ever certain in this world -- except, perhaps, that you never get anything unless you go after it. In my view, and that of the Government, we owe it to the Canadian people to go after it. Certainly not as a "leap of faith". But with our eyes wide open, and with our homework done.

Thank you.