

As I indicated earlier, our economic relations with the United States have grown steadily over the past several decades. Does anyone seriously believe that Canadians have less sense of national identity today than we did in 1935? Is our sense of ourselves less vital now than fifty years ago?

Consider even more recent times. In the 1970s, we witnessed serious division between Québec and the rest of Canada, and there were bitter quarrels between the eastern and western regions of our country. Those divisions had nothing to do with our closer economic relations with the U.S. They sprang from indigenous and historical sources. And we have overcome them. Canada today stands as a mature, united, country ready to assert its position in the world.

The decision to open negotiations with the United States will not weaken our sovereignty. It is an assertion of sovereignty in an increasingly interdependent world. It demonstrates our confidence that we can be as productive, innovative, ingenious and efficient as our American partners.

Sovereignty is dynamic, not static. It is constantly changing. It is not an artifact to be kept under glass and protected from the intrusion of change.