

We are well on our way to building a NAFTA framework that will bring benefits to all three countries for years to come. Canada's objectives in these negotiations, we should recall, have not changed: opening the highly protected Mexican market to Canadian exporters of goods, services and investment capital; maintaining, and where possible improving, the benefits we achieved in the FTA, and ensuring that Canada remains a highly attractive location for job-creating foreign investment and technology. Our involvement in the NAFTA will help us attract investment, which would not be the case if we were excluded.

I am aware of the speculation that in the upcoming trilateral negotiating session, ministers may conclude the deal. We will all work for that result, and would all certainly be pleased if that were the outcome, but from my discussions this past weekend, it will be difficult to reach agreement this weekend on all issues.

As you know, in the last stage of any negotiation, the remaining issues are usually those that are the most difficult to agree on. There is no drop dead date for us. The schedule we are on is to find a good agreement.