

- I know that when we began this Initiative there were some in the country -- even some in this room -- who questioned the process. They were concerned that the process of developing a plan of action through public consultations would be fruitless.

I am glad to report that their concerns were not justified.

Many expected that there would be little possibility of their accomplishing anything beyond highlighting huge and irreconcilable differences. And yet, the remarkable fact was that there was a very substantial degree of convergence of views throughout all the consultations across the country.

This was reflected not only in the community and regional talks, but also in the sectoral or portfolio discussions as well as in the national consultations.

It is seen in the participants' response to issues like:

- building collaboration across sectoral and confrontational divides in business, labour and government to meet common goals;
- focusing on quality and value-added in our exports;
- flattening organizations and thus empowering more people with functional decision-making;
- focusing on renewal of human resources;
- making government institutions more responsive to Canadians' desire to build self-reliance, and making economic decision-making more collaborative;
- revitalizing social safety nets to create opportunities;
- building strategic alliances to take full advantage of the trading opportunities gained for Canadians through trade liberalization; and
- finding the capital to finance innovation upon which expansion of our knowledge-based economy depends.

Throughout the consultations, Canadians have suggested ways that Canada should adjust to the realities of a global knowledge-based economy. They focused not so much on what governments should do to effect this change, but rather on what individuals, communities and companies could and should be doing. A recurring theme was the search for 'best practices.' Canadians want to