

This has been a busy agenda, filled with actions and results. We have shown that we are open for business. We have shown that we mean business.

Of course, the business of building a renewed Canada is now on the mind of every Canadian.

Undeniably, the latest round of talks on Constitutional renewal has been long and arduous. It has been confusing for many Canadians and often painful for Canada as a whole. Many are wondering if it was worthwhile. Why couldn't we just leave things alone? Why bother with constitutional renewal at all?

The answer is simple. If we wanted a strong, united Canada -- a Canada ready to evolve and adapt to the challenges of the 21st century -- the Constitution needed to be amended. We had to make fundamental changes in the way the federal and provincial governments work together, to ensure that team Canada can evolve to meet the requirements of an increasingly competitive, interdependent world.

Some Canadians have been complaining that the process of Constitutional renewal has been obscuring the bread-and-butter issues of the economy -- the so-called pocket-book issues like unemployment. What I hope that these people will agree on is that the pocket book issues are inextricably linked to national unity. Our jobs, our financial stability, our standard of living and our prosperity depend on the achievement of a lasting constitutional settlement.

Whatever our differences, all Canadians can agree on one thing. We all want to secure a lasting constitutional settlement so that governments in every region and at all levels may turn their full attention to economic recovery and growth.

We need a united Canada -- a Canada where we can face the global challenges of the 21st century together. We need a Canada where, by working together, we can preserve and strengthen our privileged place within the community of nations.

Thank you.