

people from diverse backgrounds from different parts of the country.

This group listened to Canadians in every walk of life and every region. They produced an action plan for prosperity. That blueprint, with 54 specific recommendations aimed at all sectors of society, was delivered to the Government in October.

It calls for a partnership effort by Canadians, to build our prosperity on the solid foundation of productivity.

Let me emphasize that the Action Plan is an active plan. It has been influential. It is now part of our national agenda. In fact, many of the objectives that I will be talking about tonight flow directly from that document. In addition, I want to mention just a few specific actions that have been taken since October.

- We have provided federal support for the creation of a Canadian Network for Total Quality, a private-sector partnership in pursuit of quality. The purpose is to help Canadian businesses tap into the expertise they need to lead the world in quality.
- The federal government has agreed to join with private-sector partners and the provincial governments in building a high-speed, broad-band "information highway." In terms of nation-building, this is the 20th Century version of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. The project will be led by companies in the telecommunications and computer fields: Stentor, Unitel, IBM Canada, Newbridge, Gandalf, DMR and others.

The Action Plan contains strong recommendations for action on education. This area is inseparably linked to our economic performance, and I want to discuss it in detail here.

The quality of our educational and training systems demand constant evaluation in the same way that we look at every other competitive factor -- in relation to our current needs and in relation to what other nations are doing. We must constantly review techniques. The work of upgrading the quality of Canadian education must be continuous.

And it must be national work -- work by the nation.

Because the truth is that competition between countries is, at one level, competition between education systems -- ours versus theirs -- at every level from kindergarten to postgraduate.

During the Prosperity consultations, two messages kept coming through. In education, Canadians want nothing but the best. They are willing to pay for it. They know they are already