

Whether our partnership endures and grows hinges on the success of efforts at reform in the Soviet Union. Those reforms are risky and extremely complex. Success is not assured. But let there be no doubt about it: Canada is not a fair-weather friend of the Soviet Union. We support reform unreservedly and unambiguously. On success in that reform hinges a new structure of international order. On success in that reform hinges the fulfilment of Canada's own interests.

Some may feel the Soviet Union is, to quote Neville Chamberlain in another context, "a far away country, of which we know little." It is not. In this global village, the Soviet Union is a neighbour. How it manages its future will influence how well we can manage our own.

Now is not the time to turn our back but to extend our hand. Now is not the time to discourage, but become engaged. This is a window of opportunity. We must seize that opportunity now or see it lost forever. We must support reform because reform is right. We must support a new order there because it affects a new order elsewhere.

We cannot overestimate the consequences of failure. And we must not underestimate the tremendous benefits that success can bring.

It is not in the interest of international order for the Soviet federation to fall into civil war and anarchy. It is not in the interest of that order for a superpower which still possesses thousands of nuclear weapons to opt to abandon its commitment to arms control. It is not in Europe's interest for ethnic violence and hatred to spill over borders or for millions to migrate because of fear or deprivation. And it is not in anyone's interest to lose the positive partnership Soviet engagement can be in addressing so many problems in so many regions and around the world.

And Canada has special interests, special assets -- advantages which the Soviet Union lacks and needs -- in communication, transportation, food products and distribution, management skills, housing, oil and gas extraction. And we have the unique advantage of our ethnic richness -- a richness which benefits us and can benefit them -- proud Canadians who know the customs, culture, language and systems of the Soviet Union. Our assets can become theirs, and together we can build prosperity and create jobs here and in the Soviet Union.

Those interests will not be met if the Soviet Union drifts into disarray or returns to its authoritarian past. And today, the prospect of success is not sure and the risk of failure is there. There is no disputing the fact that the Soviet Union is at a critical point.