

We have recently introduced the NAFTA legislation in Parliament, and the bill is currently going through second reading. We are committed to seeing this legislation proceed through the stages of parliamentary approval, with a view to bringing the Agreement into force on January 1, 1994.

As you know, the NAFTA remains controversial in some quarters. As exporters, you know the importance of this Agreement to Canada's continued prosperity. I urge you to get this message out to Canadians.

In the meantime, Canadian businesses have already begun to increase their presence in the Mexican market -- simply because of the exposure given to that market by the NAFTA negotiations. The Government is also taking steps to help you capitalize on new opportunities with our new North American partner. Last month, I had the pleasure of launching Access North America, a new trade initiative that will introduce many more Canadian companies to the Mexican market.

Our trade liberalization efforts, however, are only a part of a wider government package to restructure the economy and improve the environment in which you conduct your business. We accomplished this restructuring through the Agenda for Economic Renewal, which we introduced in 1984 and which has guided the policies of the Government ever since.

Through policies like expenditure control, deficit reduction, tax reform, deregulation, privatization, as well as trade liberalization, we established the macro-economic bedrock upon which a progressive, forward-looking economy could be built.

One of the most significant policies we put into place was the reform of the income tax and sales tax systems. We removed the hidden federal sales tax on manufacturing and replaced it with the Goods and Services Tax (GST). Unlike the old tax, the GST is highly visible and, therefore, not a popular tax -- but it is a fair tax. Above all, it does not penalize Canada's exporters, as the old tax did.

All of the elements of the Agenda for Economic Renewal form part of a strategy to transform Canada's sluggish economy that we saw in the early 1980s and position it to adjust to changing circumstances in the 1990s and beyond. The policies we have pursued are the building blocks of Canada's prosperity.

They have also set the stage to make you more competitive in international markets. It is now up to individual companies to go out there and conquer new markets, not just in the United States and Mexico but all over the world.