

Altogether, the consultation process has been a completely absorbing experience, and although it's running me a little ragged I look forward to the rest of the tour. We'll be on the road until early May, then we'll go back to Ottawa to hear some formal presentations, and then we'll try to digest it all. After that, I'll be discussing what we've heard with the governments of the provinces, and by sometime in June, I hope and expect to put my preliminary recommendations to Cabinet.

But that will be only the first step in the process. The government is putting together studies in depth, with the help of the private sector, of the impact each possible course of action would have on each of Canada's sectors, and these studies will contribute to my final recommendations -- which should come toward the end of the summer -- and of course, to whatever course of action the full Cabinet decides to recommend.

Whichever course we choose, I believe we will find a receptive negotiating table in the U.S. Our American counterparts have told us, and I certainly have no reason to doubt them, that they are as interested as we are in strengthening our trade relationship. And they would like to move as quickly as possible to strengthen it.

But whatever the course turns out to be, I can guarantee two things. It will be determined on the basis of what is in Canada's interest. And it will reflect the will, as expressed in our consultations, of Canadians across land.

Thank You.