

Another approach would be to negotiate a framework agreement, which would commit the two governments politically to objectives and mechanisms for the removal of trade barriers and the settlement of bilateral disputes. This could take off from the Quebec City agreement.

Or finally, we could try to negotiate a comprehensive agreement with the U.S., one which would involve most of the trade passing both ways between us.

Those are the four options. There are advantages and pitfalls to each of them. None of them is perfect, none of them entirely free of risk, and we have made no prejudgments on which course would be best for Canada. But this phase of the consultation process is nearing an end, and after talking to the governments of our ten provinces I hope to be able to put my preliminary recommendations to Cabinet some time next month. It's still too early to tell which way we'll be going, but one thing I can tell you. Wherever I have gone, the feeling has been close to unanimous that we have to do something of substance to secure our access to the U.S., and that we'd better get on our horses and do it.

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. It is my hope that we can start the negotiations before the end of the year.

Let me make a final observation. Twice this century, Canada and the U.S. have almost -- but not quite -- reached agreement on opening up our trade. A Canadian election in 1911 scotched the first attempt -- and turned out the government for trying. Prime Minister Mackenzie King put the hex on the second attempt in 1948, supposedly after hearing voices from the spirit world.

But this time it's different. We don't talk to spirits any more. And we're not just talking in the wind. Our Prime Minister, and our Government, are absolutely committed to giving meaning and substance to the new era in our relations, and the Canadian people are behind us. So my message is this: We're open for business. And we mean business.