

Because time is of the essence, I would urge you to complete your membership, as soon as possible. Officials will be available to assist in this regard this afternoon. I cannot over-emphasize the need to have broad stakeholder representation in your groups and would be grateful if you would let me know of the proposed membership before finalizing your list. In terms of timing, the action plan for your sector and your recommendations for the national plan of action should be available by the end of next April.

The Steering Group's report will contain a synthesis of the findings of all the consultations and reports from provincial consultations, and other information like the recommendations in Professor Michael Porter's report on Canadian competitiveness. A national plan of action and mechanisms for monitoring achievement of milestones, among other things, will be the focus of the Steering Group's report. It will be a report that will help to guide both private and public-sector decision-making in the next decade. So you will have a major role in shaping the economic prosperity of Canada.

I don't want to leave the impression that your work will go only to the Steering Group for inclusion in their report. I can assure you that my colleagues and I will also be receiving copies of your reports and plans of action. I know that these reports will focus primarily on what you are going to do in the private sector to meet the competitive challenges. However, I am sure that you will have recommendations which the government will be able to use in shaping our policies in the coming years. Let me also say that we will not be sitting around with our feet on the desk saying: "We can't act until we get the plan of action." On the contrary -- we know that some action will be needed urgently and some will require concerted and persistent effort over the course of many years. So we will take your recommendations into account as soon as we receive them, and we look to you and other players in the private sector to support their implementation.

I had hoped that we would have labour co-chairs in these sectoral consultations. Because of the importance of having the views of labour on these issues, I urge all of you, in assembling your membership, to try to obtain labour participation. Competitiveness affects them as much as any group in society. I believe that there are many in the labour movement who see the competitive challenges we all face and want to find ways of meeting the challenge. They know that it is no good employing rhetoric when the competition is employing know-how. So I would hope that the labour movement will realize that the Prosperity Initiative has much to offer them, and gain from them. I welcome their participation.

A practical plan of action for your sector, or sectors, should be the focus of your report. However, I am sure that if the only