

So we restricted access to our minds and markets, instead of encouraging Canadian initiative and excellence, as we looked inward, rather than outward. Our cultural and economic competitiveness declined. Our ability to take advantage of the opportunities that beckon a country like Canada diminished. Policies that assumed we were vulnerable were making us vulnerable.

On September 4 last year, Canadians signalled that they had had enough. Instead of drawing back from the world, they wanted this country to reach out to the world, to stand strong on our own, in circumstances that, while obviously difficult, are better for Canada than for almost anyone else.

As I said last week in the House of Commons, the cost of establishing a Polar, Class 8, icebreaker is \$500 million. But neither Canadians nor this government are about to say that Canada cannot afford our Arctic. We can afford our Arctic; we can afford the risks that are involved in actively pursuing our interests; and I believe there is broad public support, indeed a broad public desire, for Canada to begin to take those positions which express the strength and self-confidence of Canadians.

What is at issue here, in this shift from a desire to draw back from the world to a desire to reach out to the world, is not a difference of party or of ideology, but of time. The country has matured. The expectations of our citizens have matured. What we can do has matured — to a point where it is now appropriate for Canada to be more assertive, both as to who we are and as to what we can do.

You will know that among the actions on the Arctic announced in the House last week was a decision that we will withdraw a restriction that a previous government had placed on having Canada called before the International Court of Justice with respect to our sovereignty over Arctic waters. That restriction was placed there in 1970, at a time when the law of the sea was much less developed than it is now, at a time when Canada's confidence in our claims was not as strong as it is now.

What has happened is not just that there is a new government in office, but that there is a new strength to our claims. Because times have changed, it is possible for us to assert, with certainty and confidence, positions that previous governments had judged they could not.

There are, of course, risks to be run. The external affairs critic of the official opposition, the Honourable Jean Chrétien made the point, quite accurately, in the House that it was both bold and risky for us to assert our sovereignty over Arctic waters. We are saying that we are prepared, if necessary, to defend our claims before the International Court, and of course there are risks to that.

But risk is the price of opportunity. If there are risks, there are also opportunities for us in adopting a more self-confident position at home, and by extension, internationally. Perhaps the most dramatic lesson I have learned, in my first year as Secretary of State for External Affairs, is that opportunities are not static. In the North, for instance, if we don't seize the opportunities that are ours now, we could well lose them as others begin to advance their own claims. The insistence on our sovereignty, then, is important both as Canadian self-expression, and as Canadian self-interest.

In Canada's North, we have no ice-breaker that can traverse those waters year round. The vessels we do