

By creating opportunities in which Canadians can export the goods and services they produce, the stage is set for growth and jobs.

For Canada, the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] will mean better access to the U.S. market, a stronger dispute settlement process, and an important opening to the Mexican market -- a growing market of 85 million people, which has been largely protected by high tariffs and other barriers.

Thanks in large measure to the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, Canada's merchandise exports to the U.S. surged to an all-time record high of \$122.3 billion last year. That kind of growth translates directly into jobs for Canadians. The NAFTA builds on that success, contributing to the growth our economy needs to get deficits and debt under control.

In anticipation of the NAFTA's entry into force, Canadian companies are already gearing up to export their goods and services, and that means more jobs for Canadians.

A couple of facts worthy of note about our trade with Mexico: First, 80 percent of Mexican goods enter Canada tariff-free. Second, most Canadian goods entering Mexico face tariffs as high as 20 percent, along with other government restrictions that severely limit opportunities for Canadian exporters in the Mexican market. The NAFTA will change that. The NAFTA and its side agreements help create a level playing field. The agreement will create vast new opportunities for Canadian business and Canadian workers in a continental market of 360 million people -- the world's largest market.

For these reasons, I am pleased to announce that Prime Minister Kim Campbell has this morning signed the North American Agreement on Environmental Co-operation and the North American Agreement on Labour Co-operation.

These documents give legal form to the precedent-setting agreements we reached with the United States and Mexico on August 13. They create the framework for a new era of constructive co-operation on issues of vital interest to all citizens of our three countries.

In the North American Free Trade Agreement we pledged to protect and promote the rights of workers and to improve the environment. The co-operative and enforcement measures contained in the two agreements signed today have met our goals. These legal texts effectively protect Canadian labour standards and further ensure a continental respect for the environment.

Throughout the negotiations there has been close co-operation with provinces, which now have the opportunity to become participants in the implementation of the two agreements. The next step is to develop formal understandings with the provinces