

"He and I agree that our respective concerns and objectives are amenable to a mutually beneficial negotiation process," Mr. Kelleher's letter said.

Wide-ranging discussion and analysis over the last six months have convinced him that there is a high degree of dissatisfaction with the status quo across the country, the Minister said. "I was told repeatedly that the current level of unemployment is unsatisfactory and directly related to the uncertainty in our trade relations with our principal trading partner."

"I am satisfied that there is a strong provincial consensus in favour of bilateral negotiations with the United States to secure and enhance our access to that market," the letter said.

"A trade agreement will save Canadian jobs now threatened by protectionist measures in the short term and create better jobs for the future....Canada has reached a plateau of maturity which helps to define the opportunity before us. Our economic strength and cultural integrity have evolved to the point where we can enter negotiations