

It would be very hard to exaggerate the importance of keeping our business with the U.S. going, and the paper sets our four possible courses for doing so.

We could try to go along under the status quo.

Or we could try to negotiate arrangements limited in scope to particular sectors, or to particular types of non-tariff barriers.

Or we could 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.

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

In releasing the discussion paper, the Government made no prejudgment on which of the four strategies would be the wisest and most appropriate for Canada. None of them is entirely free of risk. Rather than prejudge the issue, we have taken it to the people of Canada.

I have spent most of the past month on the road, listening to business people from almost all sectors of the economy, hearing the problems of exporters of all kinds, talking with labour leaders and academics. So far, our consultations have taken us to eleven Canadian cities, from coast to coast, and we have four more to go.

I know that you want me to tell you where, on the basis of the consultations, we seem to be heading. But I doubt that you really expect me to, and the fact is that it's still too early. We're still in the process of listening, and we will be until the middle of next month.

What I can do, however, is to tell you something about what we've been hearing so far. It has been very educational, very illuminating and, I must say, in many respects, very encouraging.

I have been enormously impressed by the depth and breadth of creativity in the business sector. Canadian companies create and export an amazing variety of goods and services, and to all parts of the world.