

Mexico's demand for manufactured goods, including office equipment, housing market goods, and other manufactured areas, will increase as Mexico builds its economy. The automotive market in Mexico is projected to grow much more rapidly than the mature U.S. and Canadian markets, providing new export and investment opportunities for Canadian automotive companies. These opportunities were virtually closed to Canadian automotive producers before Mexico agreed in the NAFTA to eliminate its automotive decree.

This is only a very partial list. Canadians can compete in the world and we can compete in Mexico. The NAFTA gives us an advantage over all non-NAFTA countries in the growing Mexican market. It is an advantage we must seize.

The broader agenda is prosperity

Trade is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The ultimate end is prosperity—prosperity offered by an efficient economy that generates the wealth necessary for Canadians to pay for the social programs they demand and expect, to spend on public education, to create higher-paying jobs; in other words, to underwrite continued future improvements in our standard of living and quality of life.

We are currently negotiating side deals on the environment and labour. Canada pressed for strong improvements in these areas during the original negotiations, and we are fully committed to working with our NAFTA partners to promote the highest possible level of co-operation in these important areas. We do, however, have to get these agreements right. They have to work, and for that reason the Canadian position will continue to oppose the use of trade sanctions to enforce compliance; we will insist instead on mechanisms that promote co-operation and certainty, not confrontation and uncertainty.

Some honourable members opposite pretend that the government is losing its negotiating leverage by proceeding with Bill C-115 before the side agreements have concluded. The fact is that Bill C-115 is not relevant to the achievement of Canada's objectives in the side agreements. The NAFTA is a good deal for Canada with or without the side agreements. We are working hard for good agreements on environment and labour co-operation, but the value of the NAFTA to Canada is not conditional upon the conclusion of these additional agreements. All that delaying our implementing legislation would accomplish, perversely, would be to deprive Canadian businesses and their workers of the certainty needed to finalize plans for taking advantage of the many opportunities opened by the NAFTA.

Let us focus on the facts, not on fears

We are also not prepared to see Canadians misled by misrepresentations about the NAFTA. We will expose the myths.