

help those not currently in the workforce realize their full potential. A Prosperity Council is proposed to stimulate the creation of partnerships, achieve consensus, and monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving all the goals.

The Action Plan is based on two simple principles -- using innovation to create opportunities for all Canadians and building new partnerships to make this happen. The Plan calls for Canadians to develop a new spirit of co-operation and collaboration. It points to the urgent need for partnerships between management and labour, between parents and educators, between business and governments, and between different levels of governments themselves. You already have a strong record of building partnerships to accomplish common goals. So I am sure that you will not hesitate to build the partnerships to help implement the Action Plan. I urge you all to work, both within the Canadian pharmaceutical community and in your local communities, to bring about full implementation of the Plan at all levels.

I am pleased that the Drouin-McCamus Action Plan has attracted so much interest, and, as I said earlier, the federal government will be responding in due course to it. At the same time, I note that there has been some criticism that there is nothing new in this Plan, that we have heard it all before, and I am afraid that this misses the point. Unlike other studies that contained many of these suggestions, this Action Plan is the result of a wide consensus-building process. It is not just some ivory-tower exercise driven by bureaucrats and academics. It is not just the views of the independent Steering Group.

It is the distillation of a broad consensus that the Group found in the country about how we should rebuild this society. To dismiss this Plan, in the way that some of the critics have, is to insult the thousands of Canadians who participated in developing it. To those who were looking for something new, what is new is that this is not an academic paper, but an action plan.

Some critics suggested that it does not contain short-term solutions. The Plan reflects Canadians' consensus that we can no longer afford only short-term solutions. Others suggested that there was nothing in the plan for single mothers, students, small business, and many others; that it reflects a corporate agenda. Building a learning culture in which every Canadian has opportunity to earn and learn to his or her full potential is an agenda that any Canadian can endorse. One critic said that what is needed is co-ordinated federal-provincial fiscal policy -- yet this is precisely what Action Three in the Plan calls for. Let us read the Plan before we shoot it down.