

I stressed Canada's commitment to the Round in my meetings recently with the new United States Trade Representative, Mickey Kantor. Ambassador Kantor was concerned that a protectionist label had been put unjustifiably on the new administration. But from our meeting, I believe that he and his administration are clearly in favour of an open trading system.

While Canada can only marginally affect the outcome of the world trade talks, we can go far in the field of market access, trade rules and enhanced competitiveness -- both through the NAFTA and right here in our own domestic market.

As exporters, you know the benefits of eliminating international trade barriers. But as Canadian business persons, you also know the benefits of eliminating interprovincial trade barriers. You know that a more integrated and open internal market will improve industrial competitiveness.

The Committee of Ministers for Internal Trade discussed a plan of action when we met in Toronto in December. As a first step, we agreed to recommend to our respective cabinets that we launch a comprehensive negotiating process. Our goal will be to achieve a broad agreement, by June 30, 1994, for a more open and efficient internal market. As I said earlier, this will enhance our ability to tackle opportunities in the North American and world markets.

We are already making significant inroads in expanding our trade with Mexico. Canadian business interest in Mexico is at an unprecedented level because of the exposure given to it during the NAFTA negotiations. The government is also taking steps to help you capitalize on new opportunities with our new North American partner. Last month, for example, I had the pleasure of opening a Canadian trade office in Monterrey. All this is happening even before the implementation of the NAFTA.

I expect that the NAFTA legislation will be ready for introduction toward the end of this month, and we will proceed with a view to bringing the agreement into force on January 1, 1994.

Moving toward that goal, the whole country will be focused on the question of whether or not we can compete in the expanded North American marketplace. As members of the CEA, you know the answer to that question. You know that Canada can compete -- that there are great opportunities to expand our export success story beyond the United States and into the burgeoning market of Mexico.

I urge you, through all the means at your disposal, to communicate that message wherever you can. Canadians must believe in themselves and their ability to compete. A positive, confident attitude is essential to every enterprise, both personal and corporate. A positive vision of the future is also essential for Canada as a nation to take the steps necessary to keep us competitive on the world stage.