

Good evening, and thank you, Keith,¹ for your kind introduction. It is a great pleasure to be able to address your annual conference being held here in Ottawa to mark Canada's 125th birthday. I have no doubt that Keith and his colleagues will not be shy about showing you some of the important new additions to Ottawa's economy that they helped achieve.

We meet at an historic time. In just 35 days, Canadians face a critical choice about fundamentally reshaping their nation -- modernizing and equipping it to be a world leader and doing so in peace and with mutual respect. Saying "yes" to the Charlottetown accord will end debate on unanswered questions that have plagued us for nearly 50 years. It won't end constitutional evolution forever, but it will show that such evolution is possible.

Saying "yes" will send a strong signal to the rest of the world. What the rest of the world will hear is that it is possible for nations to renew themselves by discussion and compromise. What they will see is a declaration of self-confidence in a common future by a people who want to stay together and work out their differences -- together. The international business community will look to Canada as a haven of stability and progress; a place in which to invest to serve the entire North American market. I urge you all to vote "yes" on October 26, and I urge you to work in your own communities to ensure that Canada's answer to the question of renewal of the federation, is a resounding and unequivocal "yes."

Such a result will mean that we can turn the focus of our energies to securing prosperity for the united nation we want to bequeath to our children. In a profoundly changing world, Canadians know that traditional strategies won't be enough. New approaches are needed to meet challenges that Canadians perceive as threatening our ability to generate new jobs, endangering our standard of living and jeopardizing our social programs.

Since we were first elected in 1984, the federal government has shared these concerns. In November of that year, we introduced the Agenda for Economic Renewal, which has formed the basis of our comprehensive plan to transform the sluggish economy of the early 1980s and help position it for the 1990s and beyond. Now we must complete the task: we need to decide what steps to take to secure our prosperity in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. But the federal government alone cannot secure prosperity. Every Canadian has a stake in doing so, and they are rightly demanding action. They also want to be consulted about what action is required.

¹ Keith McGruer, President of the Ottawa-Carleton Economic Development Corporation, will be introducing the Minister.