

Although the free trade agreement was a monumental accomplishment for the future of Canada - and it was accomplished with great difficulty and effort - it was also in many ways the easiest step to take.

I do not mean easy in the sense of the degree of difficulty in negotiating the text. Rather, the US is a relatively familiar market for Canadians - because of the similarities of our two peoples - our shared heritage, our long history of co-operation, our geographic proximity, our common use of English.

But the future opportunities for Canadian trade lie beyond North American shores - in the Pacific, Latin America, and Europe - East and West.

While the United States is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, our most important trading partner, the hope for new growth in trade opportunities lies in these other regions. Free trade is not the last word. It is the first step. A way to consolidate our economic foundations so that we can take on the new world beyond.

To make the point even more clearly, the health of the American economy - which will obviously help determine the growth in Canada\US trade - is dependent on expanding market opportunities abroad. Therefore, a successful FTA is itself dependent on new trading relationships elsewhere.

If we are to become masters rather than victims of our economic destiny, we must learn the ways of our competitors. We can not expect them to accommodate our preferences, our practices, our peculiarities.

I have talked to Canadian businesspeople who are boldly developing new initiatives in the Soviet Union. They are men and women of vision and imagination, people used to risk who thrive on challenge. But for many of them the Soviet market is strange - uncomfortably unfamiliar. There is the language. I mean here not simply language in the sense of the spoken word. I also mean the vocabulary of business. They discover that fundamental concepts - which Canadians treat as second nature - are often only just beginning to be understood in the Soviet Union. There are different customs. The system remains a bureaucrat's dream and a businessman's nightmare. The decision-making process is opaque. The players are innumerable.