

Just last week, the International Monetary Fund predicted that Canada's real GDP will rise by 4.5 per cent next year -- the fastest rate of growth among all the industrialized nations.

While those figures are encouraging, we know we have got to keep pushing to make the Canadian economy more competitive. It is evident that Canadians need to concentrate more energy on technological innovation and developing new partnerships among business, labour, educators, a variety of interest groups and all levels of government. We've got to reduce internal trade barriers, find more effective ways to raise investment capital and improve our education and training system.

The government has focused attention on these issues during the past year through an extensive series of consultations with individual Canadians under what I've called the Prosperity Initiative. Canadians recognize their competitive strengths. We also realize that we must adapt to the demands of today's world economy. And, above all, Canadians are internationalists.

The Uruguay Round

Canadians have long believed that the key to improving living standards, not only in our own country but the world over, is to pursue trade liberalization everywhere. This position is best demonstrated by our continuing involvement in the development of the GATT.

Since its inception in 1947, the GATT not only helped bring about a tenfold increase in world trade but, in the process, has helped to boost Canadian's real per-capita GDP from around \$9,000 in 1950 to more than \$22,000 today (barely 1.8 per cent below that of the U.S.).

Now, as the GATT aims for a further cuts in tariffs and a broadening of the rules to cover agriculture, services, and intellectual property, the stage is set for new gains in trade and prosperity -- worldwide. For those reasons, the successful completion of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN) remains our number one trade policy priority.

Because of our tremendous dependence on trade -- over one-quarter of our economy -- perhaps no country has been more disappointed than my own that the world community has not yet been successful in completing the Uruguay Round.

For those of you who may be losing hope in the current round of negotiations, let me say that there is light at the end of the tunnel. But reaching that light demands hard work, political will and a fundamental commitment to trade liberalization. A comprehensive, balanced and substantive result is within our grasp.