

By building on learning opportunities, Canada can become a truly inclusive society in which all Canadians have a fair opportunity to participate fully. This third element of the plan calls for an integrated approach to help those who are not currently in the workforce realize their full potential.

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 reflects Canadians' strongly expressed view that everyone must work together to meet the challenges. The plan calls for a new spirit of co-operation and collaboration -- between business and governments, and between different levels of governments. Building these partnerships will themselves pose new challenges for many Canadians.

Like the federal government, these groups will need to study the Action Plan and consider how they can work together to implement the recommendations aimed at them. The federal government continues to be committed to taking economic action. For example, we have been cutting expenditures, streamlining operations and improving assistance to small business -- all actions that are in line with the Steering Group's recommendations. We will be reviewing the proposals with a view to improving upon that progress and will be carefully reviewing the plan over the coming months.

I'm pleased that the Drouin-McCamus action plan has attracted so much interest. At the same time, I note that there has been some criticism that there is nothing new in this plan, that we've heard it all before. 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 isn't 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 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 doesn't 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