

I am particularly delighted to announce that two very distinguished Canadians, Mr. David Robert McCamus and Mme. Marie-Josée Drouin, have agreed to act as co-chairpersons of the Steering Committee, in its tasks of managing the public consultations and developing a plan of action.

The Steering Group will be made up of representatives from the business, academic, labour and scientific communities, as well as leading economic and social organizations. The Group will consult communities across the country, as well as provincial governments and other national organizations. In addition, it will benefit from specific industry discussions conducted by Cabinet Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased also to table a discussion paper, entitled Prosperity through Competitiveness. This, together with a companion paper that my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, will be tabling in a few minutes, will serve as a focus for these consultations.

Together, the papers identify areas in which we must improve so we can compete effectively, efficiently and profitably. Each area -- learning, science and technology, investment, domestic markets, and trade -- is important. None of the components of the Prosperity Initiative is revolutionary. But they are the nuts and bolts of the country's economy. Because time is of the essence, I have asked the Steering Group to complete its consultations by mid-year, and to produce its final action plan by the end of next summer.

The change that is needed must not be a quick fix. The competitive challenge can only be met by systematic, not piecemeal changes; sustained, not sporadic commitment to compete with the best in the world.

Canadians may have to change the way they think -- all of us, from the cabinet maker to the Cabinet Minister -- if we can ever hope to change the way we act. Because how we act is the real test of how productive we are going to be. And we can't sustain our standard of living unless we strengthen our ability to compete.

Whatever plan of action results from this process we are launching today, it will be important that as a country, we strike while the iron is hot, that we act on our plan quickly and collectively while we are still able to do so from a position of relative strength and prosperity, with the capacity to generate wealth to support the changes that are needed.

It's time for us to maximize our use of something we actually have in abundance: our ingenuity. Millions of Canadians can still remember when Canadians had the best hockey teams in the