

The goal of international competitiveness brings me to a fourth challenge - domestic political harmony.

I am sure you share my concern over our seeming inability to come together as a nation. To say the least, the current constitutional and linguistic environment is not encouraging.

As a Newfoundlander, I believe the rigid constitutional stance of the current government in my native province is both dangerous and shortsighted.

As a Canadian, I fear that the rejection of the Meech Lake Accord would set in train forces of disintegration and disunity which would be hard to control; and

As the Minister of International Trade, I question how we can effectively compete abroad if we refuse to cooperate at home.

Like all Canadians, I have no idea how the future will unfold should the Meech Lake Accord fail. All one can predict with certainty is additional uncertainty and instability. And that is surely the last thing we need in this rapidly changing and uncertain world. Hopefully, those who wish the Accord to fail will look again before they force all of us to leap into the unknown. For there is still time to avoid a self-inflicted wound.

So those are four profound challenges we all face together in 1990.

- the challenge to reduce our annual deficits to secure sustainable, non-inflationary growth;
- the challenge to put in place a modern sales tax system;
- the challenge to liberalize global trade; and
- the challenge of constitutional stability.

Clearly, how we meet these four challenges will go a long way toward determining our prospects over the decade, and our ability to seize the opportunities created by freer trade.

Can we meet these challenges?

Certainly we can. There is surely no doubt about our ability to do so. But unfortunately, that is not the question.

The real question is, will we meet them?

I can assure you, that my colleagues and I are determined to do everything we can to ensure that the answer is yes.