

national reconciliation, the improved labour climate and the favourable attitude toward foreign investment since the Government of Prime Minister Mulroney took office.

But, policies based on faith in Canadians have done more than attract the interest of investors.

By creating an environment which frees the energies of enterprising Canadians, we have helped to make this country the strongest economic performer among Western industrialized nations.

As my colleague Mike Wilson, the Minister of Finance, pointed out recently in his budget:

*We have been number one in economic growth since 1984. Ontario's economy has grown on average five per cent a year since 1984.

*We have been number one in employment growth -- more than 1,500,000 jobs created since we came to office. In Ontario, 547,000 jobs have been created. Most of those jobs have been full-time, well-paid jobs in every sector of the economy.

*Economic growth last year was more evenly balanced -- unemployment actually dropped in all 10 provinces.

*In Ontario, unemployment has dropped a full four percentage points since we came to office and is now 5.6 per cent.

*Mortgage rates have dropped three percentage points, saving homeowners \$1,200 a year on a \$50,000 mortgage and helping businesses to expand throughout the country. Housing starts in Ontario in 1987 were over 29 per cent higher than they were in 1986, over 62 percent higher than they were in 1985 and over 118 percent higher than they were the year we came to office.

*Inflation is in check. In spite of Ontario's booming economy, inflation in the province has remained below five per cent. Strong economic growth, combined with low and stable inflation rates, means an improved standard of living, especially for our most vulnerable citizens such as seniors and lower-income Canadians.

*And, both consumers and business are displaying more confidence than ever.

The Free Trade Agreement is a vital part of the Government's economic program to build Canada for the 21st century.

In a nutshell, we have agreed to: