

entrepreneurship could make an enormous contribution to Canadian competitiveness. The ExportVision program, launched as part of Export Month, focuses on turning this potential into real sales. I think everybody in this room knows that the competition is brutal. It is tough, but we can and we must reach out to export markets because it is the export sector that is leading us toward what we hope is a sustained recovery.

As you all know, in the last year, the business climate in Canada has improved, with labour productivity on the increase and lower interest and inflation rates. This was a good sign for Canadians and for our trading and investment partners around the world.

Yet, as next week's constitutional referendum approaches, both Canadians and our partners around the globe are concerned about the future -- a future that will be defined, in part, by the route we choose as a nation to take on October 26. The question is whether we will step forward and put the past constitutional gridlock behind us.

You know, Canadians have been searching since the Rowell-Sirois Commission in 1940 for ways to improve our Constitution -- ways to modernize it and make it reflect the realities of 20th-century Canada. We have made no less than five previous attempts to accomplish this, in 1950, 1964, 1971, 1982, and 1987 to 1990 with Meech Lake, each of which ended in failure, rancour and division. This will be the sixth effort. The question facing Canadians is whether they want to take a step into the a future of certain constitutional evolution or will we take a leap into an uncertain, possibly less prosperous future and vote "no?"

I do not think it will surprise you when I tell you that I am going to vote "yes" in the referendum -- I have my "yes" button here. I am doing so because I think it is a very good agreement.

It covers that range of problems people had with the existing constitution -- including those that led Quebec not to sign the constitutional agreement in 1982.

It addresses concerns that people have about the permanency of some of our social programs, some of the transfers from the federal government to the provincial governments. It addresses the aspirations of Aboriginal peoples to gaining a greater degree of control over their livelihood through the provisions for Native self-government. Finally, it looks at the powers between the federal government and the provincial governments and provides for the transfer of some of these powers in forestry, in mining, in particular, so that the policies of the provincial governments can be more sensitive to local needs.

There are also provisions for the removal of interprovincial trade barriers, which are a drag on our economy. While we did