

It occurs to me that, had I been speaking here three years ago today. About how we could strengthen Alberta and Canada, I would have been proposing that we dismantle the National Energy Program, replace the Foreign Investment Review Agency, get the federal deficit down, improve relations between Ottawa and the provinces, and wake up to our problems and our opportunities in international trade.

We don't need to talk about those goals anymore. The federal deficit is billions of dollars lower than it would have been under the old regime. The NEP and FIRA are gone. Canada's First Ministers, despite their widely advertised differences on the questions, have agreed to proceed together in trade talks with the United States. Those are not small accomplishments. They represent a fundamental change in the direction of Canadian national policy, a change that is particularly important here, because Alberta suffered so severely from the policies that have been put aside.

The irony, for Albertans, is that, just as we began to pursue national policies which encourage Alberta to grow, new problems are arising in our basic industries - energy, agriculture, now lumber. None of these problems are simple, and some of them require domestic action of Canada's Governments. With that in mind, at the end of April, the Prime Minister announced new federal initiatives in energy and agriculture. We increased the domestic price of wheat, removed taxes on farm diesel and gasoline fuel, froze the current level of the producer freight rate, changed the PGRT. In both those fields, we are considering other domestic measures, and look forward to provincial governments acting in their jurisdiction.

But it becomes more and more clear that many of the solutions we seek lie in international actions. Foreign policy is not so foreign anymore. For example, look at agriculture.

Canadian farmers are among the most efficient in the world. They have made tremendous gains in productivity. With virtually no increase in the agricultural land base, our farmers now produce food for 5 times as many people as in 1940 - and they do it at a lower unit cost.

Close to half of our production is exported. Agricultural products amount to more than 8% of our total exports - more than newsprint, more than crude petroleum, and petroleum and coal products combined, more than motor vehicle parts, if we exclude engines.