

Routine Proceedings

Can the minister assure us that the Government of Canada will not sign the main treaty until the parallel agreements have been negotiated?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend has distorted what the minister of trade from Mexico said in Montreal yesterday and I would ask him to reconsider what he has just said.

Regarding the supplementary agreements, we will be starting the discussions on these agreements in the middle of March. This has been agreed among the United States, Mexico and ourselves just today. At the same time, we will be considering the legislation in this House, as will they be in the United States Congress and the Mexican Congress.

These will all move together at around the same pace and we will be able to consider the implications of each as that process continues.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I quoted an article from the daily *Le Devoir* on what the Mexican secretary allegedly said in his speech.

As for the supplementary accord, the minister knows very well that the process can easily be derailed and that the expected deadlines might not be met, in which case he must consider the possibility that the government will have to decide whether or not to sign the treaty alone. The minister has enough experience to know that if he wants to win from the Mexicans the kind of concessions we need for the environment and minimum labour standards, he must not give them what they want right away but rather negotiate on both items with them at the same time.

The Americans are doing that, as Mr. Kantor said recently. I ask the minister why he leaves it up to the Americans alone to fight for environmental protection and Canadian workers.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I said this morning that we had agreed with the Americans and the Mexicans to continue discussions on the environment and on labour as well.

We made some proposals on these accords a year ago and I think that now, with the new American administration, it is possible to have a discussion on these accords.

As I said, these discussions will begin in the second week of March.

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[English]

POINT OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question in the House yesterday on the North American free trade agreement, the Minister of the Environment characterized an internal environmental review as an environmental assessment. I invite him to correct that impression.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry, the invitation may or may not be accepted, but that is not a point of order. That is a continuation of debate.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, for the sake of clarification, it should be made very clear that the government undertook to do a federal environmental assessment of the NAFTA. It was public and it was known by all the members in this House who are interested in that issue.

I was surprised by the comment of the member yesterday, because when I commented on this environmental assessment that had been made public, she was in the room at that time or I thought she was. At least, it was somebody who looked a lot like her.

Mr. Speaker: The difficulty with this is that it is another way of extending debate. It is getting around the rules and I do not think we can do that.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 11 petitions.