

exceedingly important to understand. Unfortunately, in this age of television we have this tremendous tendency to reduce the complex to simplicity which makes it easier for us but it can also be very misleading.

I see the Free Trade Agreement as an opportunity. We in Western Canada have always believed in opportunity. There are no guarantees but there were no guarantees when the pioneers came to Western Canada. When our forefathers came to Western Canada there were no guarantees of success. There was no guarantee the region would be productive and there was no guarantee that there would be markets for what was produced. There was a willingness to take a risk. First because the people who came believed in themselves.

I believe that we as Canadians must continue to believe in ourselves. I say with some sadness that sometimes I believe we are our own worst enemies. For whatever reason, Canadians have a certain inclination to develop an inferiority complex. As a result of that inferiority complex, we cannot compete with others because they are larger but I say to you, Mr. Chairman, that we throughout our history have demonstrated that it is not the size of the nation that is important, it is the quality of the people who constitute the nation.

I believe our history demonstrates that we have the capacity to be a world leader. We have the capacity to trade with our American friends to the south. I believe, given the opportunity we as a nation are about to take that opportunity and we will prove that we can in the future do as we have done in the past. We can do with it in such a fashion that we will build a future. We should take that opportunity, grow with it, and build a future that is important, not only for ourselves, but for our children and generations that will come after us.

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The pioneers who settled western Canada did not think only of themselves, but of other generations. They thought of their children and grandchildren. We as a nation have a responsibility to also think of our children and grandchildren. The Free Trade Agreement represents for our children and grandchildren a future on which all of us can build.

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to compliment the staff of the House of Commons for making me feel at home on this the night of my maiden speech by turning the clocks to Pacific Standard Time, the time in my riding of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt. I would also like to take this opportunity to

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thank all of the people in that riding for their faith in me and returning a member of the New Democratic Party to the House of Commons for the first time in more than 30 years.

The last member of the New Democratic Party to sit in the House was Owen Lewis Jones who sat in the House between 1948 and 1958. At that time he had a number of concerns about the area that are still shared today, concerns about agriculture, and productivity of the farmers. Those are still some of the concerns of the Okanagan and certainly concerns that I share with the farmers of that area.

The riding of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt is an interesting riding with four major regions. The Merritt area is heavy in mining, ranching, and forestry. The Similkameen area shares in common with the Okanagan region the major thrust of tourism and agriculture. The area of the boundary country is also agriculture and forestry, along with mining. It is a diverse area taking in many things of interest. In particular, Grand Forks is an area that has an interesting culture with a Doukhobor background. It also has a history that goes back into the early days of British Columbia.

One of the problems in our area, particularly in the Merritt area, but shared by the whole Okanagan—Similkameen region, is that in British Columbia the unemployment rate is approximately 2 per cent higher than the average for the rest of Canada. The Okanagan region is 2 per cent above that. In the City of Merritt the unemployment rate adjusted is 24.4 per cent, and unadjusted of those employable over 15 years of age and under 65 is pushing 37 per cent. This is something that we as Members of the House have to work toward solving. I as a Member of that region intend not to sit in the corner and say nothing, but to speak up in the House on matters such as this, and point out to the House that that is unacceptable anywhere in Canada, and certainly is unacceptable in the region that I represent.

Another large factor is that a major portion of the population of the Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt area is the seniors population. Recently I read that the population of seniors over 65 is 11 per cent in Canada. In the area of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt there is more than double that. The town of Osoyoos where I come from and reside has a seniors level over 65 of some 28 per cent. The neighbouring small community of Oliver has a seniors population of 35 per cent. The average over-all is somewhat double the national