

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Mr. McDermid: I know where they are coming from, and you are wrong.

The Chairman: The Hon. Member's time has expired.

Mr. Fee: Mr. Chairman, first I would like to echo the comments made by my predecessors on both sides of the House. They stated what an honour it was to dedicate their maiden speeches in this House to such an important topic as the free trade debate. I doubt whether Parliament has faced such an important issue since the Second World War.

I would like to offer my congratulations to you and to your colleagues in the chair on your appointments. It is very apparent, even to a newcomer like myself, that you and your colleagues are all held in very high esteem by the House. I wish you very good fortune as you face the challenges ahead.

It is also a privilege for me to stand in this House as the representative for Red Deer. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the voters of Red Deer for placing their faith and confidence in me. It is with a great deal of humility that I take up this role, standing as I do in the shadow of such a fine and able servant of the people as was my predecessor, the Hon. Gordon Towers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fee: Mr. Towers is very well respected in Red Deer, as evidenced by his regular large majorities with every election that he faced. There is no doubt that he had the confidence of a majority of the people in Red Deer. I have been impressed, even in Ottawa, as I wandered the halls talking to my colleagues on both sides of the House with the respect of which they talk about my predecessor. Probably more important than that, when staff members in the Commons, the security guards, even the bus drivers, find out where I am from, they ask and inquire after Mr. Towers and tell me that I have very big shoes to fill. I realize that I have big shoes to fill, and I am going to do my best to fill them.

I have also been told that there is only one proper way that I could officially recognize my predecessor, who in addition to providing total commitment to the people of Red Deer, was noted for his poetry. With the indulgence of the House and the Chair and with respect for the poet of Dromore, I would like to offer the following:

There's tough work ahead for Douglas Fee
If I'm to serve as well as he
Who, with lively verse before me came
Into this House of national fame.

Alas no more will this House hear
From Dromore's Bard now in Red Deer
But I am here and though not a bard,
I am prepared to work just as hard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fee: Mr. Chairman, through you to the House, I would have to state that I am not a poet, and that will probably be the last effort you will hear from me.

My riding is a reflection of the very best that the Province of Alberta has to offer. From the majestic Rockies in Banff National Park in the West, through to the bustling City of Red Deer in the East, our riding boasts beautiful scenery, sprawling farms and ranch land, rich resources and, most important, friendly, hard working people.

Agriculture is the basis of our economy, but we also rely very heavily on the energy sector, oil, gas, and petrochemicals. The Free Trade Agreement is going to have a profoundly positive impact on the energy sector as a whole and on my riding in particular. In the short time available, I would like to explain why we see benefits and why a clear majority of the voters in Red Deer supports the Free Trade Agreement.

First, let me deal with tariffs.

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The eventual elimination of tariffs will allow the free exchange of goods across the Canadian-American border. Most of our natural resources already cross that border duty-free, but tariffs are still quite high on value-added goods. As a result of the Free Trade Agreement, not only will Canadians be able to increase their exports, particularly in further processed goods, but Canadian consumers and manufacturers will have access to lower priced goods. As has been expressed earlier in the House, the Canadian consumer will be the ultimate winner from the free trade arrangement.

Under this agreement both Governments agree not to discriminate against foreign purchasers of energy by using export taxes. In other words, price will be determined in the market-place where it should be determined. All provincial and federal rights to develop our energy resources in Canada remain intact. The Free Trade Agreement is a logical, consistent step toward a freer market in energy. It meets all our prior obligations to the International Energy Agency.

This Government began the liberalization process when it abolished the National Energy Program and the Petroleum Gas Revenue Tax. I was somewhat shocked