

*Adjournment Debate*

more than are the fish swimming in them or the oil and gas trapped under them.

Trade agreements only cover water when water has entered into commerce as a product. Canada's growing exports of water products benefits from such coverage. There is absolutely nothing in the NAFTA or any other trade agreement that forces Canada to either exploit its water for commercial use or to export its water.

What is in the NAFTA is the right to restrict or prohibit the export of water products when necessary to safeguard the environment or to protect human, animal, plant life or health.

Canada's 1987 federal water policy prohibits large scale exports of water by interbasin transfer or diversion. Therefore since we do not engage in large scale exports of water in any form, the proportionality requirement would have no real impact on Canada. A proportion of zero is zero.

Under the NAFTA, U.S. and Mexican investors and service providers will be subject to the same domestic laws and regulations as Canadians. The NAFTA creates absolutely no new obligation or right for anyone to exploit or export water as a good.

Why did we not dispel any lingering doubt by simply exempting water from the agreement? The answer is plain. There is no exemption for water in NAFTA simply because it is not necessary to insert an exemption from obligations that do not exist.

To do so would throw into doubt whether obligations exist for other natural resources in their natural state such as trees on the ground where clearly no such obligation exists either.

• (1715 )

The bottom line is that Canadian governments both now and under the NAFTA have the freedom of action required to regulate the exploitation of our water resources. Until it is exploited and entered into commerce as goods, water is not covered by the NAFTA or any other trade agreement.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley):** Mr. Speaker, on March 16 of this year I rose in the House and asked the minister of health a question regarding the alleged extra billing that was being done by

physicians and doctors in Prince George, British Columbia and other parts of that province.

The minister provided what I thought was a very instructive and good reply in that he acknowledged some awareness of the situation. He acknowledged that under the Canada Health Act the government does have an ability to move in this regard and that it was looking into the matter with the provincial government.

Following the March 16 intervention in the House I wrote to the minister to inquire further and he suggested in his letter that his staff was looking into the matter. More recently, he also mentioned that he has written to the B.C. minister of health, the Hon. Elizabeth Cull, to get information to determine from the department's point of view whether the extra billing was taking place.

Obviously some time has passed since that question. I would look forward to the answer tonight from the government to get an indication as to what further progress has been made in this area. I have consulted with and talked on the phone late yesterday with the staff in my constituency office in Prince George. I can tell the government that we are still getting phone calls and reports from people in Prince George alleging either extra billing or that people are being asked to pay for medical services up front.

I report that to the government. I am very interested to hear what the government has to say about this particular issue and what kind of progress has been made.

**Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for Science and Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the questions brought before this House by the hon. member.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare is on record in this House as saying that he will enforce the Canada Health Act and impose dollar for dollar financial penalties on any province in which patients are being extra billed for necessary medical services.

The Canada Health Act recognizes that it is our provincial and territorial governments that are responsible for determining how our health care services are to be delivered and financed. The act does not give the federal minister the power to stop extra billing in any province or territory. However it does give the minister the authority to withhold a portion of federal transfer payments for health from the province in which the extra