

It is good for our relations with our Mexican friends and partners and also for our relations with countries in Latin America and beyond that may join NAFTA and other market-opening trade agreements in the future.

[English]

Yes, there have been some costs as companies or individuals adjust to this larger market. Some have lost their jobs. Some companies have shut down. That is regrettable, but unfortunately it is inevitable in a dynamic global economy.

Is the benefit not worth it? We are now a stronger economy, better able to compete and the export successes I described earlier prove that. Is there anyone in this House who would deny the benefits I have just described for developing nations? The transition to a full NAFTA will occur over a 10-year period, not too long to delay the benefits unduly and not too short for a reasonable transition for all three countries.

What are the other benefits? The conservation and protection of our natural resources, our air, land and water will be another preoccupation of the 21st century. Likewise the quality of life in the work place will be a concern of workers and managers everywhere.

The NAFTA breaks new ground in addressing environmental issues in ways never done in any trade agreement before. For example, the NAFTA specifically allows for the inclusion of scientific experts in the settling of trade disputes. It states that NAFTA partners should not lower environmental standards to attract investment.

Above all, the NAFTA recognizes the responsibility of all partners to maintain and improve their environmental standards. The NAFTA in its preamble lays out the broad objectives of the agreement and confirms a commitment of all three countries to improve working conditions and living standards and enhance and enforce workers' rights.

Canada is committed to pursuing additional environmental and labour accords in trilateral discussions with Mexico and the United States. That was our objective in February 1992 when we first put forward Canadian proposals in this regard. We welcome the initiative the Clinton administration has taken in bringing these proposals back to the table because they will lead to strengthened environmental co-operation among our

three countries and an open dialogue about the work place in the new North American market.

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The NAFTA has proved to be a powerful catalyst to pursue the environmental and labour agendas. While Canada had a number of bilateral agreements with Mexico on these subjects before the NAFTA negotiations, the trade talks have led to a more concentrated program of trilateral discussions.

Without the NAFTA, it is unlikely we would be preparing for the establishment of a North American commission on the environment today. The functions of this commission may well include harmonizing environmental standards at higher levels, developing limits for specific pollutants, promoting environmental science and technology and increasing public awareness of environmental issues.

In the labour discussions we will be pressing for the establishment of a trinational body to focus on the improvement of working conditions and living standards in all three countries. I am quoting here: "This type of commission would help give effect to the NAFTA's commitment to protect, enhance and enforce basic workers' rights".

Throughout the negotiations of the NAFTA and now as we negotiate these parallel agreements, we have been able to call on the knowledge and expertise of the provinces, labour organizations and environmental groups. They have played an extremely important role in helping the government develop and refine its agenda. They will continue to do so as the labour and environmental talks proceed in the weeks ahead. The NAFTA is part of this government's commitment to the quality of working life and sustainable development.

The NAFTA will contribute to economic growth. That is clear, but it will contribute in a way that takes into account the health and well-being of the population and the protection and preservation of the environment on which we depend.

The world of nations has been rapidly transformed into an increasingly interdependent global economy in just a matter of decades. The dawn of the 21st century rises over an interconnected marketplace that includes at the same time mass production for true world markets and very specialized production for highly individualized niche markets.

Government Orders