

thanks for his service and dedicated leadership during that time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Littlechild: Westaskiwin is a microcosm of Alberta. When one thinks of Alberta—oil and gas, agriculture, hard-working optimistic westerners come to mind, people of all ages, cultures and ambitions, optimistic ambitions, which leads me to a second reason why I believe my first presentation is one of very great honour. Our riding is a rural, urban and multicultural constituency with major centres including Leduc, Wetaskiwin, Ponoka and Lacombe.

I am particularly happy to address Bill C-2 and present for the record my support for the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. This agreement, like everywhere else in the country, became the central issue in the election campaign.

Let me then make some comments on how we perceive freer trade. The election was one of determining our future. It presented us all a challenge to shape a stronger economic future. We welcome that challenge. As previous Members have stated, trade with the U.S. is very important for Alberta. The U.S. is by far Alberta's largest market, accounting for about 75 per cent of its total exports. Much of this is in the energy sector, both natural gas and crude petroleum.

A part of our constituency includes Leduc No. 1. Since that time energy development has become a very vital source of our livelihood. It is important, then, for our constituency to develop a freer, more predictable and secure relationship with our single largest and most important trading partner. The Canada-U.S. agreement presents us all with potential economic growth.

Let us look closer for a moment at the petrochemical industry. With 75 per cent of Alberta's exports going to the U.S. duty-free entry will be advantageous. The proposed elimination of tariffs over five years will be a significant factor. It will help the industry remain competitive.

● (1800)

This House has heard from the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) and other colleagues—Members from Red Deer, Wild Rose, and Calgary Southwest—during the past few days about the Joffre gas plant. I am happy to say that the Joffre gas plant is in my constituency. It currently employs 500 people and 100 contractors. With freer trade, they will expand

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business and hire 250 more people and 30 more contractors. There is potential for even more from the spin-offs that will result in the various products that can then be marketed in the United States. They will save \$40 million this year from tariffs, money they can invest locally.

In Wetaskiwin, Denim Drilling Ltd., a company involved in exploration and seismology, anticipates the implementation of the Canada-U.S. agreement because they know freer trade will benefit their company.

In Leduc, Mr. Brian Hughes, a businessman in the oil and gas industry for 25 years, and the owner of the Leduc Inn, believes "that freer trade is the best thing to happen in 100 years". He believes that his oil business will benefit due to his trading with the United States. In addition, with regard to the hotel industry, he believes that tourism will also have positive benefits.

In Nisku, J.L.M. Tanks and Equipment Ltd., a company that competes internationally, now feels it will be better able to negotiate and compete with the United States.

These are but a few examples of constituents who are looking forward optimistically to passage of the free trade legislation. The conventional oil and gas exploration and the related service industries are vital to the economy of our constituency.

Agriculture, from a business perspective, whether it is farming, cattle, dairy or poultry, must have a fair shot at surviving. The new Canada-U.S. agreement will greatly benefit the Wetaskiwin area farmers. Some recent American actions have hurt our agricultural exports.

Under the Free Trade Agreement, the new Canada-U.S. Trade Commission and special panels will be a place to solve such disputes quickly and fairly. Benefits like the greater access to U.S. markets that farmers will enjoy will, in turn, benefit consumers.

I want my constituents to be able to take advantage of the opportunities under the Canada-U.S. agreement. I want my constituents to become involved in a positive development of our economic future in Canada.

People like Mr. Ken Pohl, who is in the cattle business in Ponoka, and hog producers in the Lacombe area feel their companies will benefit from freer trade as they buy and sell cattle and hogs to the United States. Mr. Pohl says it will be easier for him to deal with the United States.