

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Why is the government retreating on its commitment to official languages?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, this pamphlet was distributed in connection with a television show that was on TV last night both in English and French concerning the environment. I think it met with some success. Environment Canada co-operated with this effort. We did not have the direction of it. We offered some support and were happy to do so.

I also want to point out that this does not mean that because there was private sector participation that this was an endorsement of any product of any kind, but rather a co-operative effort. I understand that the pamphlet was distributed in French in the province of Quebec. After we found out that was the case, we were told that it would be made available in English on request. We hoped that was the case.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I have here the cover of the pamphlet and it is clearly marked Environment Canada. Whether it was prepared directly by the department or not, I believe the department should not have permitted such information to be distributed under its name in violation of the Official Languages Act.

I would like to know what the minister will do to correct this affront to Canada's language minorities and to assure it does not happen again?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concern the member is bringing up and we take that concern seriously.

We are witnessing here some of the difficulties we run into from time to time when we want to do these initiatives in partnership with the private sector and many partners. These are part of the difficulties we run into.

I do not think there is any bad faith on anybody's part here from those who distributed the pamphlet. There was a sincere willingness to do this effort in a co-operative manner.

I will take the member's representations constructively and I assure him that we will learn from this lesson and, if anything, look at these initiatives a lot more closely in respect to how we deal with them and distribute information to the public.

TRADE

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Prior to the Canada-U.S.-Mexico talks, a number of American spokespersons have announced that they intend to reopen the Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade talks relative to cultural property of Canadians.

• (1450)

In his meeting this week, is the minister prepared to tell all Canadians that if the Americans intend to open the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement to get new access to Canadian property rights, he would get up and walk away from the table rather than meet that condition?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is saying that if the Americans suggest they want something from the free trade agreement and if we are not prepared to give it, we should walk away.

I think that is a very short-sighted view. We see some benefits in the North American free trade agreement, but not nearly to the same extent as the free trade agreement with the United States. Trade with the United States totals about \$200 billion. It is only \$2 billion with Mexico, but there are longer term benefits.

I have made it very clear in discussions I have had with Mrs. Hills, Mr. Katz and with other people in the U.S. administration what our policy is on reopening the trade agreement in relation to cultural products. It is simply not on.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, is the minister, as he spoke in answer to this question, saying to all Canadians that under no circumstances will he allow Canada to participate in a reopening of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement if cultural property from Canada is on the table, that it is an absolute "no", and he will not negotiate that issue?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I have said time and time again that we are not going to negotiate that issue. It is not in the interests of Canada to see the free trade agreement opened. In particular, we have said that the cultural industries are not the subject of negotiation. Mrs. Hills, Mr. Katz and the other negotiators are quite capable of putting things on the table. Just because they put them on the table does not mean we have to accept them. We are going to