

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement**[Translation]*

My riding has more senior citizens than perhaps any other in the country. During this election, I did not try to frighten them, but I was there to hear them tell of their fears about their pensions and health care and future housing and home care programs.

● (2330)

[English]

My constituents include many public service employees, people dedicated to the competent, impartial and professional delivery—in many cases right across Canada—of the programs mandated by the Parliament of Canada. My constituency includes representatives of the many and rich cultures that make up Canada.

We have in Ottawa West some of the densest urban development in North America—but we also live with the historic Ottawa River along our northern border, with beautiful parks and woods, and the world famous Experimental Farm.

We are reminded daily of the importance of protecting our environment.

My riding has a diverse and healthy business community, ranging from the very small entrepreneur to those employing hundreds of workers. In Ottawa West, appropriate to the season, we produce everything from hand-carved shepherd's crooks to sophisticated equipment for space research.

I cannot speak for the farmers, or the fishermen, or the miners, or the foresters of this country; but I can, and will, listen to their representatives when they speak, and I had hoped that the Prime Minister and the members of this Government would have done the same.

We have not been through a high stakes poker game, Madam Speaker, or a corporate takeover, or an exercise in pure market forces competition where it's "winner take all and damn the consequences for the loser"; we have been through a democratic process, a process involving not only who gets elected but what the people out there have to say and how we can best bring that wisdom into our decision making in this Chamber. And it doesn't start at 57 per cent or 43 per cent; it starts with the desire to listen to all of the citizens of this country and synthesize what they have said and reflect it in the laws that we pass.

The Prime Minister, during the campaign, gave the people of Canada verbal assurances, and he now refuses to put those assurances in writing, and he does so

because he knows that Head Office in Washington will not back up his guarantee.

I had hoped that we were not coming here simply to watch the Government ram through its legislation while ignoring the legitimate and accommodatable concerns of the many who do not support it. They may have the power; but that does not give them the right to do it.

The people have decided, yes; but the people also spoke. They spoke to all of us, whether they voted for those on that side of the House or those on this side of the House. They spoke to us about their love for a country that is different, a country that is more just, more compassionate, and more tolerant. And they do not want to lose that, regardless of how they cast their votes.

We in this House have failed in the last 11 days to accommodate those deeply held concerns. We have missed a rare and golden moment in history, a moment we could have seized coming so soon after the campaign itself.

We still would not have a deal that I or my Party think is good for the country, but we would have had a better deal, and I am sorry that we have missed that opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to address the Chamber and say a few words on the Free Trade Agreement. I think it appropriate, on the occasion of this my first speech in this Parliament, to thank the people of Niagara Falls for choosing me as their representative for a second term.

Of all of the riding names represented in this Parliament, I should not think that there is one that is more famous than that of Niagara Falls.

I had occasion to visit Russia with the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), and during that visit an official from Leningrad, on hearing that I was from Niagara Falls, said to me, through a translator—and for once nothing was lost in the translation—that while Niagara Falls is in the middle of the continent, it is heard all over the world.

I am very proud to represent the riding of Niagara Falls, a riding which has in it the city of Niagara Falls, the city in which I was born. In addition, it has the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Niagara-on-the-Lake boasts the only Lord Mayor in Canada. It was the first capital of Upper Canada—and