

There is no obligation under the Free Trade Agreement for governments in Canada to permit any such commercially-provided management of health care services, for example, contracting for a private company to manage purchasing for a hospital. Even if a provincial government did decide to do so, there is nothing to prevent future provincial governments from reversing such a decision at any time. The point is, there is no obligation to do so in the Free Trade Agreement.

It is up to Canadians to decide what social programs they want and a Progressive Conservative government will maintain, strengthen and expand social programs for all Canadians. That's why we introduced Child Care legislation.

The real threat to social programs and to regional development assistance is not from the Free Trade Agreement, but rather from the kind of mismanagement of government finances that the Liberals were so guilty of. If the federal deficit had not been brought under control by this government, Canada's financial ability to sustain these programs would be undercut by our obligations to service a mushrooming public debt. This government has managed the nation's finances so that not only have we maintained these programs, but we have been able to add to them, as we have with Child Care and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

John Turner says that regional development assistance will be lost because of the Free Trade Agreement. He is wrong. It isn't even covered in the Agreement.

John Turner has said, as he also said about social programs, that the negotiations on subsidies and countervail will threaten regional development. He is wrong. Canada will continue to provide assistance for regional development under programs of general application. Such programs are not countervailable under the GATT rules. Again, if the Americans were to suggest at some time over the next five to seven years some distorted approach to these issues, we would simply say no.

This brings me to the issue of sovereignty. John Turner says that with the Free Trade Agreement we are on our way to becoming the 51st state. Ed Broadbent says we will be forced to become like Americans. These allegations have no basis beyond political opportunism.

To me, sovereignty has a practical test - the degree to which a country controls its destiny. Canada gains sovereignty through the Free Trade Agreement by being placed on an equal footing with the U.S. in applying a common set of rules for resolving trade disputes and by achieving greater opportunities for development as a rising economic power. That is the reality of sovereignty that I want to achieve for Canadians.