

Mr. Speaker:

Canada is currently involved in three disputes under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT. Two of the cases involve decisions by GATT panels against Canada. One relates to Canada's export restrictions on Pacific salmon and herring. The other deals with the practices of provincial governments affecting imports of alcoholic beverages. A third case involves a request which we will be making for a GATT Panel on Japanese lumber tariffs. All of these cases will be addressed at the GATT Council on March 22. I want to take this opportunity to inform Members of the House of the Government's approach to these issues.

We are all aware, Mr. Speaker, of how vital the GATT and the international trading system are to Canada. International trade means jobs for Canadians. To be precise, three million jobs in this country and one-third of all we produce depend on export markets. The GATT rules are the best protection for keeping the channels of world trade open and for protecting Canadian jobs. Without these rules, Canadian industries and Canadian workers would be exposed to indiscriminate actions by our trading partners. The "law of the jungle" would prevail in international trade. An export-dependent country such as Canada would be highly vulnerable.

Members of this House from all Parties, Mr. Speaker, have recognized this reality. We all agree that the GATT system works in the interest of all Canadians and protects their employment and economic well-being. But the system is only as strong as the will of governments to respect it. To enjoy the benefits of membership in the GATT, Canada must also be prepared to fulfill its obligations.

Salmon and Herring

Let me turn first to the GATT Panel report on salmon and herring. This emerged from an investigation under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act. This section allows U.S. industry to file complaints about alleged unfair trading practices. What the U.S. industry alleged to be unfair in this case was that Canadian processors were buying up substantial quantities