

years. But let's understand what is involved. The Council of Canadians recently made the preposterous claim that "the total number of goods and services jobs lost in three years under free trade has climbed to 1.4 million." This assertion is a fraud, on several grounds. First, it is a gross rather than a net number. Worse, thousands of the jobs it lists as lost are in sectors specifically exempted by the FTA (for example, autos, beer, transportation and defence equipment), or in sectors (iron ore mining, gold mining) where trade has been duty-free for years. Included are jobs lost in the fisheries sector. Apparently even the decline in the cod stocks came about as a result of the FTA! It's time to blow the whistle on this "free trade blame game."

Our numbers, supported by studies by reputable independent organizations such as the University of Toronto indicate that, if anything, the FTA has stimulated growth, lowered the rate of inflation, and lessened the severity of the recent recession.

There are complex factors at work here, which the Council of Canadians simply ignores, including a global recession, structural adjustment to technological developments, the globalization of production and markets, and a secular decline in manufacturing in all OECD countries as they become knowledge-based service economies. Canada is not immune from these developments.

But rather than wring my hands and make the FTA the scapegoat, I am addressing real problems and looking for real solutions. In working with Canadians in finding solutions, I am heartened by the numerous success stories that I hear. They may not make good newspaper copy, but they are real.

Let me cite a typical story. Sit-Rite Products Ltd., makers of high-end furniture, decided that they would consolidate their activities in Mississauga and close their Atlanta facilities. It's a decision the company does not regret. It has been good for its employees, good for its suppliers and good for its customers. They did it because Mississauga offered a good site from which to serve the whole North American market. It made sense because borders were open.

Canadian agricultural exports were up 29 per cent in the first quarter of this year over the same period last year, on a global basis.

If the answer to Canada's economic difficulties lay in closing our borders and handing out subsidies, I would not hesitate to recommend that route to my colleagues. But the bitter experience of the past few years is proof positive