

Supply

Shefford, the mover of the motion, to become familiar with the bill.

• (1305)

The preamble reads as follows:

WHEREAS the Government of Canada together with the Governments of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory have entered into an Agreement on Internal Trade;

AND WHEREAS the reduction or elimination of barriers to the free movement of persons, goods, services and investments is essential for the promotion of an open, efficient and stable domestic market to enhance the competitiveness of Canadian business and sustainable development—

This is the preamble to the bill.

Clause 5 is not too complicated. Clause 7 says: "The Agreement is hereby approved".

This is an agreement between the provinces and the federal government. This agreement between the federal government and the provinces shows once again how efficiently Canadian federalism can accommodate differences and produce concrete, practical results.

For example, in Brome—Missisquoi and particularly in the Estrie region, there is an very high degree of co-operation in labour matters between the Monteregian and Estrie manpower associations and Human Resources Development Canada. We sat down together and signed an agreement, a document looking at job opportunities in the next five years.

This is another example of the co-operation between the federal government and Quebec.

Canadian federalism requires a high degree of consultation and co-operation between the federal government and the provinces on a wide range of issues. Federal-provincial relations are doing very well in Brome—Missisquoi. I must say that the relations are quite friendly.

Our federalism is based on a series of intergovernmental mechanisms that allows us to overcome difficulties. That is why, over the years, we were able to work out various arrangements between the two levels of government.

This approach is successful in our federation because the Prime Minister, the premiers, ministers and public officials all work in close co-operation to achieve concrete, practical results.

These arrangements are an essential component of the Canadian federation and provide flexibility.

These various mechanisms and this great flexibility associated with our kind of federalism enabled us to achieve the following in co-operation with our partners: the signature of infrastructure program agreements with all the provinces.

This program was implemented quickly with the co-operation of the federal government and all the provinces, is working very well and has created jobs from coast to coast, which is what Canadians want.

We also signed action plans to reduce overlap and duplication with eight provinces and two territories. We set up Team Canada. As you may recall, the Prime Minister travelled to Asia and South America for the purpose of making inroads on new, promising markets. Again, for the purpose of strengthening the economic union, we signed an agreement to reduce interprovincial barriers to the free movement of goods and people.

Consultations on interprovincial barrier elimination in Canada is a fine example of co-operation that lead to a practical agreement, which reflects the flexibility and vitality of this federation. The Government of Canada engaged in consultations with the provinces and territories, and together they agreed on a process that resulted, once again, in an agreement which is fair and just for all concerned.

Specifically, the agreement lays the basis for preventing the creation of new barriers and eliminating existing ones in nine areas of economic activity. It increases transparency and puts in place a dispute settlement mechanism available to individuals as well as businesses to ensure government compliance with the agreement.

It provides for the development of action plans in a number of areas, so that standards are harmonized. It covers major areas like transportation and consumer protection. In addition, great emphasis is put on the environment in this agreement, thereby setting it up as a modern-day concern.

Finally, the agreement takes Canadian diversity into account by ensuring a fair balance between trade objectives and government objectives.

This is the first agreement of its kind in Canada. It represents a major victory for all Canadians. It proves conclusively that the federal, provincial and territorial governments can work together, provided there is good faith.

This agreement is a key part of this government's strategy for promoting strong economic growth in Canada and getting Canadians back to work. The Internal Trade Agreement, complete with concrete changes, implementation schedules and thorough process, will reinforce the Canadian economic union and promote freer movement of people, capital, goods and services within it. It is the exact opposite of the separatist option, characterized mainly by self-centredness and a fascination with one's navel.