

*Private Members' Business*

We have access to another market is one of the things which has added some stability to our market. It is also closer than providing a shipment to the Montreal market as we have done in the past. Some of the trade is moving on a north-south basis rather than being forced east or west as it was for the last 100 years has served the industry well on both sides of the border. We can perhaps see that happening in other commodities.

We hope to see access extended through the North American free trade agreement to include Mexico, which is a market that is growing quickly. Earlier this year a thousand Canadian firms attended a trade show in Mexico. These were not large conglomerates and huge corporations. They were small firms from 10 to 100 employees. There was interest shown there. Some contracts were signed that could develop through this initiative. Further, other countries of the southern hemisphere have shown an interest in trading with Canada.

We do have things like malt barley going into Colombia. We have trade in energy resources. We have firms in western Canada at the present time that were developing markets in some of those countries there. There is an interest on behalf of other countries in opening up trade.

Last November we announced a trade opportunity strategy that helped the agrifood sector improve its marketing success abroad. The strategy will see Canada establish positions in our embassies in key growth markets. These people in these positions will promote our agrifood products and help link up sellers in this country with buyers.

As part of that strategy we have established an agrifood export council chaired by Ted Bilyea, vice president and general manager of international trade for Maple Leaf Foods Inc. Canada. This council will help develop policies that will help us improve our agrifood export performance. At the same time we are working with industry to help the sector become more competitive even in the face of international pressures over which they have no control.

We recently passed amendments to the Farm Credit Corporation Act which gave the FCC more flexibility to help farmers who want to diversify their operations with off-farm—but related—opportunities. A number of farmers have expressed over the years an interest in being able to finance some of the farm-related busi-

nesses that they have developed. We have seen that taking place across western Canada.

We passed Bill C-54 which is the national check-off legislation that is allowing innovators like the Canadian Cattlemen's Association the flexibility to respond to market and research opportunities as they see fit. Last year the federal government launched a review of the regulations within Agriculture Canada. This involved the Grains and Oilseed Branch, including the Canadian Wheat Board, the Canadian Grain Commission and the Food Production and Inspection Branch. Industry representatives have played a central role in this process. I think the objective of this review is to reduce unnecessary policies and regulations which impede competitiveness without compromising in any way the safety of Canada's food supply.

• (1540)

Probably another area that we should look at is the interprovincial trade barriers, not just with agriculture but within a lot of other areas. There are 500 impediments to trade between provinces across this nation. Obviously agriculture gets caught up in some of the problems that we face in trying to deal within our own country.

We have made progress in a number of areas. For example we are holding discussions with the provinces on setting up pilot projects to eliminate duplicate inspections between the two levels of government.

We have tabled changes in the Canada Grains Act this spring including plans to eliminate maximum tariffs at grain elevators.

I guess we are simply posing the question: Are there other ways of doing things that in the end help the farmers' bottom line. I think it is only right, I think it is only fair that regardless of where we come from or which side of the House we are on that we must look at any way that we can which has some viability for improving the situation of those people who make their living producing an agricultural product.

We are posing the question regarding western grain transportation. It is an issue that has been sensitive. It has been coming up for generations. Most of us have heard both sides of that issue. I have listened to that ever since I was very young. We have not resolved it yet. I think it is going to have to be focused on regardless of what happens in the international marketplace. It is