

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

We know that Canadian farmers rank among the world's best traders, and they have demonstrated their skills on many occasions. Not only can we face up to our competitors in this sector, but we are also aware that access to American markets is a guarantee our farmers must have.

The value of Canadian agricultural products shipped to the United States is about \$3 billion a year and that, Mr. Speaker, does not include grains and oilseeds. It accounts for over 50 per cent of Canadian food exports. Such figures faithfully reflect the situation, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to securing access to the American market the Free Trade Agreement will protect our agricultural sector against American compensatory anti-dumping duty and salvage measures. Some Canadians may have forgotten that pork and cattle producers have been the target of retaliation, but the people involved certainly did not, Mr. Speaker. With the FTA we can guarantee that they will never again be the hapless victims of American policy. Without the FTA, Mr. Speaker, history is bound to repeat itself.

We have maintained our marketing boards and the import control measures that constitute the very basis of our supply management system. During the 1986 Tokyo Economic Summit, the whole world became aware, thanks to the leadership of our Prime Minister, of the need to undertake a global reform of farm policies. For us, the first step in that process was certainly to agree with our main trade partner. Who could blame us for having brought forward what we have recognized ourselves, along with the international economic community? Need I recall, Mr. Speaker, that agriculture is one of the main pillars of our economy, as is the case with other countries?

As a Government and also and more importantly as Canadians, we had to take the necessary measures to ensure our continuing prosperity in that area as well as in all other sectors of our economy.

Admittedly, some adjustment will be needed following the implementation of this agreement and that is why our Government has set up an advisory council on adjustment in order to react quickly and judiciously to future changes and possible problems. Businesses, unions, consumer groups, teaching institutions are represented on that council and also the Federal Government which is automatically a member, Mr. Speaker. The council has the responsibility to assess our programs and to ensure that they are used efficiently so that we are at all times ready to benefit from new opportunities arising in the work market.

Free trade will create new opportunities in the industrial sector. The Government has established a Skills Shortages Program in order to train employees in skills and jobs that will be increasingly in demand.

Companies can also use the Skills Investment component of the program in order to hire and train laid-off workers, Mr. Speaker. Moreover, communities that are particularly hard it

by new technologies or markets can ask for assistance within the framework of the Community Futures Program under which businesses can be created and training assistance given at the local level. Who said, Mr. Speaker, that this Government did not care about giving businesses the means to adjust their production to the new trade dynamics? The same free trade opponents, Mr. Speaker, who tried to ignore that Canada is a large export nation which depends to a large extent on its trade relations with the United States!

The Conservative Government is committed to adjustment programs and it has assured businesses of a secure access to the U.S. market for their products. In the future, Canadian businesses will be able to produce more goods and to diversify services, thereby enhancing regional growth through resource development and economic growth.

Our Government has put forward an industrial and regional development policy which embodies one of the principles we cherish most: a country's prosperity depends on the economic strength of each of its regions. Decentralised decision-making is the basis of this policy. In our opinion, Mr. Speaker, the people of the regions are those most able to make the best decisions to help their region develop its industrial base and its export capacity.

By having greater control over their economic future, the regions will be able to take better advantage of the opportunities offered by the Free Trade Agreement. They will be able to benefit fully from those advantages and consequently, Mr. Speaker, not only the large centres but the country as a whole will benefit from free trade.

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Allow me to give you a few examples. British Columbia will be in a better position to market its forestry products; Alberta's oil and gas sector will experience a new boom; the uranium industry in Saskatchewan will be able to expand as a result of the lifting of restrictions on uranium-enrichment processes; the Manitoba manufacturing industry will find new outlets on the American market; service industries, most of them in Ontario, will gain readier access to the American market; and Quebec will boost exports of electricity as well as pulp and paper products, not to mention eventual pork and beef sales, and demand for engineering and consulting services is expected to rise. As to the Atlantic provinces, Mr. Speaker, they will come to realize that a better trade environment is bound to spur the growth of their manufacturing and forestry sectors, their fisheries and their agriculture.

Given decision-making authority, the regions of Canada will be able to take better and quicker advantage of the new outlets of the wide North American market of over 250 million consumers. The regions will also be urged to ensure that industries switch to new technologies as soon as possible, for improved competitiveness rests on revamping the industrial base which leads to higher productivity and lower production costs. Mr. Speaker, the last two elements are essential if we