

*Supply*

It preserves the FTA exception for cultural industries. I remember all the talk in 1988 about culture and about how the door was being opened when culture was not in there. Culture is not in the NAFTA either.

Health and social services remain fully protected. Canadian government policy prohibiting large scale export of water is unaffected as well. We have heard talk about that. If it is bottled and manufactured then it can be exported. That is the limit on it and has been the case up to now.

Of course it provides market opportunities for Canadians in the area of natural gas exports. What is the impact on the environment? We are hearing a fair bit of talk about that because of the bilateral discussions that are going on. It is interesting to note that the NAFTA itself contains more provisions relating to the environment than any other trade agreement ever signed in the history of the world. There is a strong commitment to sustainable development and to environmental protection.

Countries may maintain their own environmental standards. There is absolutely nothing in the NAFTA that will bring down the environmental standards that Canadians insist upon as the basis for government in our society. It prohibits the reduction of standards in health and safety as well as in the environment that attract investments. There is going to be a procedure to observe that.

As we know there are parallel discussions going on. People seem to be suggesting that because parallel discussions have been started on the environment and labour as cases in point, there is nothing happening with respect to the environment.

I want to point out, to use a word raised by the House leader of the Liberal Party earlier today, nothing could be more erroneous than that suggestion. Canada put the suggestion on the table one year ago that we should look at further enhancing environmental predictions through trilateral discussions. With the change of government in the United States the Americans are being more responsive. Some people would suggest we are taking the cues from the Americans with respect to the environment.

There is no country in the world that has the enviable reputation of this country in terms of its record with the environment. We saw that at the onset at the United Nations conference on environment and development last June in Rio when Canada was looked to as the delegation that was providing leadership in the world in the area of sustainable development and in the area of the environment. Our green plan was looked upon as a model to be followed by all nations.

We as a government welcome the new increased interest that the new American government has in terms of environmental protection. We are absolutely delighted to have an opportunity to sit down to discuss further enhancing protection of the environment.

As well, I might say there should be no misconceptions about what the impact of collateral discussions on the NAFTA itself. President Clinton has made it very clear it is the intention of his government that NAFTA will go ahead on schedule, unchanged. It will not be reopened. It will go ahead on schedule on January 1, 1994. Hopefully by that time we will have these side agreements as well.

As with NAFTA there will be full consultations with all affected groups, with provincial governments, with business and labour groups and so on, so that the opportunities presented to Canadians through those discussion to have their input will be there, as it has been before. What is important about NAFTA is what the Government of Canada wanted to get out of these negotiations and what in fact we achieved through these negotiations. We hear a lot of talk in the House about Mexicans but as far as this government is concerned its primary concern is what is best for Canada.

• (1535)

We headed into those NAFTA discussions with the interests of Canada in mind. Essentially there were three objectives set forth by the Government of Canada. The first was access to the Mexican market, to gain access for Canadian goods, services and capital to Mexico, one of the fastest growing and most promising economies in the world, on an equal footing with the United States.