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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, September 30, 2002

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, September 30, 2002

Prayers

OPENING OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE 37TH PARLIAMENT

The Parliament which had been prorogued on September 16, 2002, met this day at Ottawa for the dispatch of business.

The House met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

The Speaker read a communication from the Secretary to the Governor General announcing that Their Excellencies, the Governor General and John Ralston Saul, would arrive at the Peace Tower at 2 p.m. on Monday, September 30, 2002, and that when it was indicated that all was in readiness Their Excellencies would proceed to the chamber of the Senate to formally open the second session of the 37th Parliament of Canada.

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, it is the pleasure of Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada that this honourable House attend her immediately in the Senate chamber.

Accordingly, the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned to the Commons chamber:

* * *

• (1400)

[*English*]

OATHS OF OFFICE

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-1, an act respecting the administration of oaths of office.

(Motions deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

* * *

• (1525)

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when this House did attend Her Excellency this day in the Senate Chamber, Her Excellency was pleased to make a speech to both Houses of Parliament.

[*Translation*]

To prevent mistakes I have obtained a copy which is as follows:

*Honourable Members of the Senate,
Members of the House of Commons,
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

It is a pleasure to greet you in the Jubilee Year of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, whom we will be welcoming to Canada very shortly.

We also mark this year the 50th anniversary of Canadian Governors General. To celebrate this, we invited to Rideau Hall an energetic group of one hundred 17- and 18-year-olds from every province and territory to participate in a Youth Forum on creating community. In Gaspé, in Nunavut, on Haida Gwaii, all across the country, we are meeting young people who are becoming catalysts for change, as they take their place as leaders in the fields they choose.

It is exciting and encouraging to hear what young people are saying and what they are doing. Already, they are innovative. They are diverse. And they will change things. Some of them will do so through journalism, the arts, business or the labour movement. Others will devote themselves to civic and public life, perhaps becoming in time your successors, to carry on the democratic traditions of Parliament to which you are committing your lives. Nothing is more precious and valuable than our way of creating a society through the exercise of our democratic rights as citizens.

And the sacrifices that some of our citizens make are deeply appreciated by their country. My trip in April to Germany, where our fallen and injured were brought from the tragic incident in Afghanistan, was emotionally shared by all Canadians, many of whom have expressed how much the sacrifice of these men has meant to them.

This kind of contribution, this kind of democratic participation, this kind of nurturing of young leadership make us what we are as a nation. It is a very precious life that we share as Canadians. And we must be prepared not only to praise it, but also to make sacrifices for it.

Canadians today are confident about their personal prospects and Canada's future. Less than ten years ago, our economy was in decline, our deficit and debt were rising out of control, our unity was under threat, our confidence was shaken.

Today, because of our collective efforts, we have new opportunities, new possibilities and new choices for the Canada we want.

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We have established the foundations for great success: fiscal sovereignty, a unified country and a confident people. We will not put at risk the accomplishments of the last decade. We will continue to be prudent and live within our means.

Maintaining our fiscal sovereignty and a dynamic economy allows us to reach higher. To find new solutions to enduring problems. To set new goals and ambitious targets. To take responsibility for building the Canada we want, for ourselves and for future generations.

We now have a generation of Canadians who have grown up in the Internet world, a generation of Canadians who are global, at ease with change and diversity, optimistic and eager to create, innovate and excel. And who believe they can achieve their aspirations in Canada. Canada must tap into and unleash this energy.

The goal of the government is nothing less than making Canada a land of ever-widening opportunity. Ensuring that the benefits of the new economy touch every community and lift every family and every Canadian.

Working together, we can put in place the health care system for the 21st century. We can get Canada's children off welfare. We can close the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. We can tackle the challenge of climate change. We can be a world leader in innovation and learning, a magnet for talent and investment. We can build world-class cities and healthy communities. We can strengthen the bonds of shared citizenship and the partnership between government and Canadians. We can secure our place in North America and in the world as a mature country, confident in who we are and where we are headed.

This is the time for Canada.

Canada and the World

We live in uncertain times. The events of September 11 demonstrated that our progress at home can be affected in a moment by world events. We see unrest in many parts of the world. We still see far too much poverty.

The government will continue to work with its allies to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. Canada will continue to work through organizations such as the United Nations to ensure that the rule of international law is respected and enforced. At the same time, the government will remain vigilant and ready to ensure the protection of Canadians from emerging threats, and will work with the United States to address our shared security needs.

But there is more we can do. Canada has a long history of contributing solutions to global problems. We will continue to speak out in every forum for the values of pluralism, freedom and democracy, and contribute to reducing the growing global divide between rich and poor. We will double our development assistance by the year 2010, and earmark at least half of that increase for Africa as part of Canada's support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. As of January 1, 2003, Canada will eliminate tariffs and quotas on almost all products from the least-developed countries.

In the face of rapid change and uncertainty, the government must engage Canadians in a discussion about the role that Canada will play in the world. Before the end of this mandate, the government will set out a long-term direction on international and defence policy

that reflects our values and interests and ensures that Canada's military is equipped to fulfill the demands placed upon it.

Putting in Place the Health Care System for 21st Century

No issue touches Canadians more deeply than health care. Our health care system is a practical expression of the values that define us as a country. Of the willingness of Canadians to share risk and accept responsibility for one another.

In 2000, all First Ministers reached an agreement on health care that reinforced our collective commitment to the principles of medicare, to working collaboratively to reform our system and to measure and report on our progress. Resources were provided. Work is proceeding. And the first public report is now available.

Building on this work, Roy Romanow was appointed to lead a commission on the longer-term future of Canada's publicly funded health care system. He will report in November.

The Prime Minister will convene a First Ministers Meeting early in 2003 to put in place a comprehensive plan for reform, including enhanced accountability to Canadians and the necessary federal long-term investments, which will be included in the next budget.

At the same time, the government will move ahead with an action plan in health policy areas under its direct responsibility. Under this plan, it will renew federal health protection legislation to better address emerging risks, adapt to modern technology and emphasize prevention. The government will take steps to strengthen the security of Canada's food system and reintroduce pesticides legislation to protect the health of Canadians, particularly children. It will work with its partners to develop a national strategy for healthy living, physical activity and sport, and will convene the first ever national summit on these issues in 2003. The government will take further action to close the gap in health status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians by putting in place a First Nations Health Promotion and Disease Prevention strategy with a targeted immunization program, and by working with its partners to improve health care delivery on-reserve.

The government will also modify existing programs to ensure that Canadians can provide compassionate care for a gravely ill or dying child, parent or spouse without putting their jobs or incomes at risk.

Helping Children and Families out of Poverty

Five years ago, Canada's governments launched the National Children's Agenda, engaging Canadians in every part of the country on how to ensure that all Canadian children have a good start in life; that families with children have the tools they need to provide care and nurturing.

No investments have greater payoff. No investments do more to break the cycle of poverty and dependency, and to maximize the potential of every Canadian.

The government will put in place a long-term investment plan to allow poor families to break out of the welfare trap so that children born into poverty do not carry the consequences of that poverty throughout their lives. It will again significantly increase the National Child Benefit for poor families, and will work with its partners to increase access to early learning opportunities and to quality child care, particularly for poor and lone-parent families. It will also put in place targeted measures for low-income families caring for severely disabled children, to help meet the needs of the child and of the family.

The government will take additional measures to address the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. It will put in place early childhood development programs for First Nations, expanding Aboriginal Headstart, improving parental supports and providing Aboriginal communities with the tools to address fetal alcohol syndrome and its effects. The most enduring contribution Canada can make to First Nations is to raise the standard of education on-reserve. The government will work with the recently created National Working Group on Education to improve educational outcomes for First Nations children, and take immediate steps to help First Nations children with special learning needs.

Parents have the primary responsibility for providing their children with the tools to learn and develop. But Canadians also have a collective responsibility to protect Canada's children from exploitation in all its forms, and from the consequences of family breakdown.

The government will therefore reform the Criminal Code to increase the penalties for abuse and neglect, and provide more sensitive treatment for children who take part in justice proceedings as victims or as witnesses. It will also reform family law, putting greater emphasis on the best interests of the child; expand the Unified Family Courts; and ensure that appropriate child and family services are available.

The Challenge of Climate Change and the Environment

Canadians know that our health and the health of our children, the quality of life in our communities and our continued economic prosperity depend on a healthy environment.

On a global scale, the problem of climate change is creating new health and environmental risks and threatens to become the defining challenge for generations to come.

As a northern country, Canadians will feel some of the effects of climate change sooner than will others. As a prosperous country, we must and will do our part.

As part of the Kyoto Protocol, Canada agreed to obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2012. Extensive consultations and preparatory work followed. The government is now intensifying consultations with Canadians, industry and provinces to develop an

The Address

implementation strategy to meet Canada's obligations over the next ten years. Before the end of this year, the government will bring forward a resolution to Parliament on the issue of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. Meeting this challenge must become a national project, calling upon the efforts and contributions of all Canadians, in all regions and sectors of the economy—producers and consumers, governments and citizens.

To conserve our wilderness areas, clean water sources and key habitat, the government will create ten new national parks and five new National Marine Conservation Areas over the next five years. It will improve the ecological integrity in Canada's existing national parks. It will reintroduce legislation to protect species at risk.

The government will accelerate the clean-up of federal contaminated sites in Canada. It will work with the United States to further improve air quality. It will accelerate its work with the provinces on improved national water quality guidelines, and ensure their implementation in areas of federal jurisdiction.

A Magnet for Talent and Investment

The Canada we want requires a strong economy. The government will maintain its unwavering commitment to balanced budgets, disciplined spending, a declining ratio of debt-to-GDP, and fair and competitive taxes. It will build on its investments in research, literacy and education, and in competitive cities and healthy communities. It will also adjust its policies to enhance the climate for investment and talent. The government will reallocate resources to the highest priorities and transform old spending to new purposes.

Skills, Learning and Research

The fuel of the new economy is knowledge. The government has invested heavily in providing Canada's schools and libraries with the information technology to connect young Canadians with the best information and knowledge the world has to offer. It has invested in access to universities and in excellence in university research because Canada's youth need and deserve the best education possible, and Canada needs universities that produce the best knowledge and the best graduates.

The Address

The government will build on these investments. It will continue to increase its funding to the federal granting councils to provide young Canadians greater support for graduate studies and research. It will work with universities on the indirect costs of research and on strategies for its commercialization to create opportunities for entrepreneurs and to fuel innovation. It will continue to work with small- and medium-sized enterprises in the development and application of new technologies in traditional and emerging sectors.

It will strengthen government science, integrating its efforts across departments and disciplines, and focussing on the priorities of Canadians.

In November, the Government of Canada will host the National Summit on Innovation and Learning. This will be an opportunity to position Canada as a world leader in such areas as health sciences, biotechnology and clean energy.

The economy of the 21st century will need workers who are lifelong learners, who can respond and adapt to change. Canada's labour market programs must be transformed to meet this challenge. To this end, the government will work with Canadians, provinces, sector councils, labour organizations and learning institutions to create the skills and learning architecture that Canada needs, and to promote workplace learning. This will include building our knowledge and reporting to Canadians about what is working and what is not.

The Youth Employment Strategy has been successful in increasing job opportunities and experience for young Canadians. But the employment needs of our youth are changing. Government strategies have to keep pace. Working with youth and other partners, the government will redirect its resources in this area to develop skills for the future and to help those who face the greatest barriers to employment. It will also work with the provinces to fast-track a comprehensive agreement to remove barriers to participation in work and learning for persons with disabilities.

The government will promote entrepreneurial skills and job creation among Aboriginal people by increasing support for Aboriginal Business Canada. It will also tailor and target its training programs to help Aboriginal and Inuit people participate in economic opportunities such as the development of Voisey Bay, northern gas pipelines and similar projects throughout Canada.

One of Canada's greatest assets—and a unique advantage in a globalized world—is our openness to immigrants from every corner of the globe. The demographic realities of an aging population and slowing labour force growth place an even greater premium on this immigration advantage. Canada must continue to be the country that immigrants choose to find hope, hospitality and opportunity.

The government will work with its partners to break down the barriers to the recognition of foreign credentials and will fast-track skilled workers entering Canada with jobs already waiting for them. It will also position Canada as a destination of choice for talented foreign students and skilled workers by more aggressively selecting and recruiting through universities and in key embassies abroad.

Smart Regulation

The knowledge economy requires new approaches to how we regulate. We need regulation to achieve the public good, and we need to regulate in a way that enhances the climate for investment and trust in the markets. The government will move forward with a smart regulation strategy to accelerate reforms in key areas to

promote health and sustainability, to contribute to innovation and economic growth, and to reduce the administrative burden on business.

As part of this strategy, the government will adapt its intellectual property framework to enable Canada to be a world leader on emerging issues such as new life forms. It will speed up the regulatory process for drug approvals to ensure that Canadians have faster access to the safe drugs they need, creating a better climate for research in pharmaceuticals. It will work with provinces to implement a national system for the governance of research involving humans, including national research ethics and standards.

The government will revise Canadian copyright rules to ensure that Canada has a progressive regime that supports increased investment in knowledge and cultural works.

It will reintroduce legislation to amend the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. It will also streamline environmental assessment processes, including implementing a single window for projects such as the northern pipeline. To pursue its strategy over the longer-term, the government will create an External Advisory Committee on Smart Regulation to recommend areas where government needs to redesign its regulatory approach to create and maintain a Canadian advantage.

The government will implement the recently announced Agricultural Policy Framework and related measures to promote innovation in that key sector, which is vital to rural Canada and all Canadians.

The Canada-US Smart Border Declaration contributes to both our national security and the free flow of people, goods and commerce across our shared border. The government will build on this work and increase its consular presence to expand fair and secure trade and commerce, and to brand Canada in the United States. It will continue to work bilaterally and multilaterally to resolve trade disputes over softwood lumber and agriculture.

Recent events in the United States have weakened confidence in capital markets, not only in that country, but around the world. The government has been working closely with all parties to bolster investor confidence and improve the efficiency and integrity of Canadian capital markets. In this regard, it will review and, where necessary, change its laws and strengthen enforcement to ensure that governance standards for federally incorporated companies and financial institutions remain of the highest order.

The Address

Many investors and businesses have expressed concern that Canada's fragmented securities regulatory structure is inadequate and an obstacle to growth. They have urged reform to ensure that businesses can efficiently access the financing they need to grow, and to assure Canadians that they will be treated fairly when they invest. Co-operation among governments will be necessary. The government will work with all participants to ensure that Canada has the modern and efficient securities regulatory system it needs.

Competitive Cities and Healthy Communities

Competitive cities and healthy communities are vital to our individual and national well-being, and to Canada's ability to attract and retain talent and investment. They require not only strong industries, but also safe neighbourhoods; not only a dynamic labour force, but access to a rich and diverse cultural life. They require new partnerships, a new urban strategy, a new approach to healthy communities for the 21st century.

Modern infrastructure is key to the prosperity of our cities and the health of our communities. Working with provinces and municipalities, the government will put in place a ten-year program for infrastructure to accommodate long-term strategic initiatives essential to competitiveness and sustainable growth. Within this framework, it will introduce a new strategy for a safe, efficient and environmentally responsible transportation system that will help reduce congestion in our cities and bottlenecks in our trade corridors.

It will extend its investments in affordable housing for those whose needs are greatest, particularly in those Canadian cities where the problem is most acute. It will extend the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative to provide communities with the tools to plan and implement local strategies to help reduce homelessness.

In a number of cities, poverty is disproportionately concentrated among Aboriginal people. The government will work with interested provinces to expand on existing pilot programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal people living in cities.

The government will target its regional development activities to better meet the needs of the knowledge economy and address the distinct challenges of Canada's urban, rural and northern communities.

The government will work with Canada's largest cities to develop targeted strategies to reduce the barriers faced by new immigrants in settling into the social and economic life of their new communities. It will introduce targeted measures to help children of recent immigrants to learn French and English, so that they can realize the opportunities that brought their parents to this country.

The government will also implement a national drug strategy to address addiction while promoting public safety. It will expand the number of drug treatment courts. It will act on the results of parliamentary consultations with Canadians on options for change in our drug laws, including the possibility of the decriminalization of marijuana possession.

A New Partnership Between Government and Citizens

Canada has a unique model of citizenship, based simultaneously on diversity and mutual responsibility. This model requires deliberate efforts to connect Canadians across their differences, to link them to their history and to enable their diverse voices to participate in choosing the Canada we want.

The government will ensure that as Canadians take charge of their future, they will have access to their history by creating a new institution that brings together the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada, providing new tools to reach Canadians, young and old. It will also strengthen key arts and heritage institutions and protect significant historic sites and buildings.

It will create more opportunities for young Canadians to help clean up our environment and assist in achieving Canada's global priorities, particularly in Africa.

It will reform our citizenship legislation to reassert the rights and reinforce the responsibilities that go with being Canadian.

It will put into action the accord it signed with the voluntary sector last December, to enable the sector to contribute to national priorities and represent the views of those too often excluded.

The government will work with provinces toward renewal of legal aid so that Canadians can have access to adequate legal representation before the courts.

Linguistic duality is at the heart of our collective identity. The government will implement an action plan on official languages that will focus on minority-language and second-language education, including the goal of doubling within ten years the number of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both English and French. It will support the development of minority English- and French-speaking communities, and expand access to services in their language in areas such as health. It will enhance the use of our two official languages in the federal public service, both in the workplace and when communicating with Canadians.

The government will reintroduce legislation to strengthen First Nations governance institutions—to support democratic principles, transparency and public accountability, and provide the tools to improve the quality of public administration in First Nations communities. It will work with these communities to build their capacity for economic and social development, and it will expand community-based justice approaches, particularly for youth living on reserves and Aboriginals in the North. The government will also work with Aboriginal people to preserve and enhance Aboriginal languages and cultures.

Canadians want their government to be open, accountable and responsive to their diverse and changing needs.

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Early in this session, the government will provide clear guidance and better enforcement of the ethical standards expected of elected officials and senior public servants. The government will strengthen the legislation governing its relationship with lobbyists. And the government will introduce legislative changes to the financing of political parties and candidates for office.

Canadians know the value and importance of the role of government and of the need for excellence in the public service. The government will introduce long-awaited reforms for the public service to ensure that it can attract the diverse talent it needs to continue to serve Canadians well.

Conclusion

The Canada we want cannot happen by government acting alone or by citizens acting apart.

We know that by pursuing the common good, we pursue our own good; that a country is more than a collection of narrow interests, it is a common enterprise to which all can contribute.

The priorities we have outlined today build on the conviction that we must add to the work of our ancestors, and leave Canada a better place for future generations.

May our future, like our past, be a story of achievement.

Fellow Canadians:

Respectful of our history, confident in our future, let each of us do our part.

Members of the House of Commons:

You will be asked to appropriate the funds required to carry out the services and expenditures authorized by Parliament.

*Honourable Members of the Senate and
Members of the House of Commons:*

As you carry out your duties and exercise your responsibilities, may you be guided by Divine Providence.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.) moved:

That the Speech of Her Excellency, delivered this day from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, be taken into consideration later this day.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Motion agreed to)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE WHOLE

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Réginald Bélair, Member for the Electoral District of Timmins-James Bay, be elected Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House.

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the motion to elect the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole. I would like to point out that this method to select the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole is controlled by the Prime Minister as is the selection of the Deputy Speaker at the beginning of parliament

and the selection of the Assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole, which the Prime Minister will be moving next.

In addition, every chairman and vice-chairman position on standing committees is controlled by the Prime Minister through his whip. There are many appointments that are required for the Prime Minister to make in a system such as ours, but there are others, like the ones I just mentioned that are inconsistent with democratic principles. Outside of this place appointments and elections are clearly distinguishable, but inside parliament the lines are blurred.

I take no issue with the candidate that the Prime Minister is proposing today, but rather the process of his appointment. This position as well as the position of chairman and vice-chairman of standing committees should not be controlled by the Prime Minister. At a minimum, the Speaker should propose the candidates for the junior chair occupants, not the Prime Minister. The chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees should be elected by secret ballot, and I will explain briefly why.

The Legislative Council of the State of Victoria, Australia passed the world's first secret ballot in March 1856. It was British Columbia that enacted the Dominion's first secret ballot legislation in February 1873. The secret ballot method of voting spread to other provinces and jurisdictions and the aim was always to secure and protect the rights of the voter. It took until the mid-1980s for it to finally arrive here. The only election by secret ballot in the Parliament of Canada is the election of our Speaker. The last open ballot in Canada was in 1872 in Hamilton, Ontario.

This method of open voting was very intimidating because it was common for parties to hire bullies to influence the vote. All kinds of methods of coercion were used back then such as blackmail, bribery and violence. There were cases where employers threatened to reduce wages or even fire those who did not vote for the right candidate. I am sure that sounds familiar to some across the way.

The March 10, 1896, edition of *La Patrie* published the text of a notice posted on the wall of a Montreal manufacturing company. It read:

We feel it is only fair to notify employees that, in case a change in government, we will be unable to guarantee the wages you are now being paid; neither will we be able to guarantee work of any kind to all the employees employed by us at this time.

Back in the 19th century it was common for parish priests to threaten their parishioners with the fires of hell to influence the outcome of an election. The tactics used by the Liberal whip during the election of chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees are not that different. Instead of the fires of hell—

• (1530)

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That issue was dealt with in the House prior to the summer recess and was disposed of in the House. It is discourteous to the Chair and to the House to raise it again.

The Address

The Speaker: I am afraid we are getting into debate. The hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar has the floor. While members may disagree with what she said, that is a matter for debate, and I am not seeking to prolong the matter by suggesting that.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, while we accept discipline in political parties, we cannot accept it being deployed to influence an election. We expect that companies would exercise discipline with their employees, but it is wrong for a company to try and influence the outcome of an election by threatening its employees. One would think that the basic principle would apply to a political caucus, but it does not.

On February 20, 2002, a number of members rose in this House and complained of the behaviour of the Liberal whip in regard to the election of the chairman of the finance committee. The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle complained, and I quote from *Hansard* where he said:

I too was involved in the finance committee yesterday. At one stage before the committee meeting started, when there were going to be two candidates for the chairmanship of that committee—

The Speaker: Order, please. We have another point of order from the Chief Government Whip.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I can only say again that this issue was raised as a point of order in the House. It was responded to. The challenges were refuted and not repeated again. The Speaker ruled on the issue. It is disrespectful of the House and of the member to raise it again.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, the House was prorogued and we are into a new session of parliament. The government should know that. Just because the official opposition is ruining its little ditty here today does not mean that there should not be democracy in—

The Speaker: Order, please. I thank both hon. members for their helpful points of order. I am not sure they are points of order. The hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar is debating a motion for an appointment. The House will hear her on that point.

• (1535)

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker,

The member for Etobicoke North and the member for London West, I was called out by one of the staff of the chief government whip to see the chief government whip, at which time she asked me how I was voting. I told her I would be supporting the member for Etobicoke North. She told me that was not the government's choice, that the government's choice was the member for London West. I implied I had made up my mind to support the member for Etobicoke North. She said to me at that time “if that happens—

The Speaker: Order, please. This time I will intervene.

The hon. member is debating the appointment of a committee chair, when the motion before the House is dealing with the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole. While I know it is interesting to tie the two together in terms of relevance we need to debate the motion that is before the House and not the appointment of chairs of committees.

The Chief Government Whip has raised the matter in a different way. I am now dealing with the issue of relevance. I would ask the hon. member to confine her remarks to the motion before the House.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, on pages 256 and 257 of Marleau and Montpetit there is an historical perspective on the Speaker. It states that in England the Crown lost its influence over the Speaker in 1642 when Charles I, accompanied by an armed escort, crossed the Bar of the House of Commons, sat in the Speaker's chair and demanded the surrender of five parliamentary leaders on a charge of treason. Falling to his knees, Speaker William Lenthall replied with the famous words:

May it please Your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here; and I humbly beg Your Majesty's pardon that I cannot give any other answer than this to what Your Majesty is pleased to demand of me.

Marleau and Montpetit goes on to explain that while Speaker Lenthall's words heralded the end of the Crown's influence over the speakership, it was the beginning of the government's authority over the Chair. The speakership then became an appointment much coveted by members of the party in power.

In Canada, prior to 1986, the Speaker was appointed by a motion moved by the Prime Minister. The candidate was decided by the Prime Minister, as is the case today with the appointments of the Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole and the Assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole.

The sixth edition of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms* is dedicated to the first Speaker elected by secret ballot, Speaker Fraser. It says in its preface:

The election of the Speaker by secret ballot has given the Members their own Speaker in a process that was designed to take the choice of Speaker away from the Prime Minister and give it to the entire House.

We must expand upon this idea and take the choice of all chair occupants and all chairmen of committees away from the Prime Minister. If it makes sense for our Speaker then it makes sense for all of those who preside over the proceedings of this House and its committees. The one duly elected Speaker cannot preside over everything. I said earlier there are appointments that make sense for the Prime Minister to make and there are others that clearly do not.

It is time members vying for these positions send a message to the Prime Minister, stating that they have neither eyes to see, nor tongues to speak to him, but as their committees are pleased to direct them, whose servants they are; and they beg the Prime Minister's pardon that they cannot give any other answer than this to what the Prime Minister may demand of them.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

The Address

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

● (1545)

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think if you were to seek it, you would find that the motion before the House might pass on division.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that in lieu of a recorded division the motion be deemed adopted on division?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Eleni Bakopanos, member for the electoral district of Ahuntsic, be appointed Assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the Chamber to adopt this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

SUPPLY

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the Business of Supply be considered at the next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a total of six days will be allotted for the supply period ending December 10, 2002.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all political parties and I would like

to seek the House's permission to move and carry the following motion without debate. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice, at the ordinary time of daily adjournment on October 1, the House continue to sit in order to consider a motion "That this House take note of the international situation concerning Iraq";

That the first spokesperson for each party may speak for no longer than twenty minutes with a ten minute period for questions and comments, provided that this period may be shared with another member of that person's party, and subsequent participants in the debate shall speak for no longer than ten minutes, with a five minute period for questions and comments;

That, at 12:00 a.m., the debate shall be adjourned and the House shall adjourn;

That, at the ordinary time of daily adjournment on October 2, the House continue to sit in order to resume the said debate, provided that, after 9:00 p.m. that day, the Chair shall not receive any quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent to propose any motion, and that, when no Member rises to speak, the motion shall be deemed to have been withdrawn and the House shall adjourn.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House proceeded to the consideration of the speech delivered by Her Excellency the Governor General at the opening of the session.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after spending the summer apprehensively contemplating my first speech before the House, I am honoured and privileged to move the motion on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to pay my humble respects to Her Excellency the Governor General and thank Her Excellency for delivering the speech today.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

I also thank the Right Hon. Prime Minister for this honour to my riding, the riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, and to its member, by authorizing me to make this motion.

I congratulate the Prime Minister on his many accomplishments throughout the past nine years as head of our government and leader of our party, as well as on his remarkable career in politics, which started some 40 years ago, just about the same time I came into the world. His devotion to our country, his determination, his leadership on the national and world level are a model for us all.

The Address

[English]

I would also like to congratulate the members of Parliament elected along with myself in the byelection of May 13, 2002: John Efford, Liza Frulla, Raymond Simard, Rex Barnes, Brian Masse and the hon.—

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that, in the House, we must refer to members by their title, not their name. I know that he will not want to make this mistake again, because it creates problems in the House.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the voters of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for putting their trust in me by electing me to represent them in the House of Commons.

[English]

Born, raised and residing all my life in the riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, I am moved by this honour which the voters of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel have bestowed upon me.

I intend to serve my constituents to the best of my abilities and to work alongside my colleagues to address the issues which confront us today and which will challenge us in the future.

[Translation]

I want to pay tribute my predecessor, the hon. Alfonso Gagliano. I thank him for his dedicated efforts in serving his constituents and all Canadians for close to 20 years. I wish him a great deal of success as Canada's ambassador to Denmark.

[English]

I would like to express my infinite gratitude to my family and friends without whose untiring commitment and support I would not be here today. In particular, I want to thank my wife Danielle for her patience, my mother Mimma for her encouragement and my father Alessandro, himself a city councillor for 18 years, for instilling in me the sense that politics is a public service in which one can partake to make our community and our world a better place.

[Translation]

I began my political life government as a school trustee, a responsibility that allowed me to witness firsthand the obstacles faced by parents and children, students and professionals, entrepreneurs and workers, and young and not so young Canadians.

The riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel was successively represented by ministers, including the hon. Alfonso Gagliano, and his predecessor, the hon. Monique Bégin. Over the past thirty years, the population of the riding has increased and become more diversified. The challenges that now face the residents of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel are similar to those that confront Canadians across the country. However, the riding that I represent is very different from the other regions of the country.

• (1555)

[English]

It is easy to say that my riding is one of the best in the country, simply because of the people. Culturally diverse, Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is not a stranger to the sound of residents casually

carrying out a conversation, intermingling two or three languages, giving rise to our own particular forms of expression. English and Italian are spoken there as commonly as French. Italians form the single largest ethnic group. The riding is home to the highest concentration of Canadians of Italian origin in the country. More recently, Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel has welcomed the influx of Haitians, Latin Americans, Asians, Arabs and many other cultures.

Home to older as well as more recent immigrants, Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is a proud example of the harmonious integration between the official language groups and the post-war immigrant wave and their children. This convergence of cultures is benefiting our community in very real ways; tangible proof that tolerance fosters cooperation, which in turn favours economic development.

[Translation]

My riding has a very diversified industrial and commercial base. Heavy industry and high technology share space with service industries. Small family businesses are located next door to companies distributing national and international brands such as Saputo and Peerless.

The recently completed 125,000 square foot Leonardo Da Vinci cultural and community centre, with its 600 seat theatre, exhibition hall, chapel, gymnasium, educational centre, indoor soccer field and bistro, is a real gem. It has become a meeting place for community organizations, business leaders, athletes, artists, actors and their public.

This project is a testament to what can be achieved when all levels of government and the community work together. It is a wonderful example of the new partnership between our government and citizens, which was so eloquently expressed in the Speech from the Throne.

[English]

Yet we, like many other areas of the country, are not immune to the threats to our universal health care system, the challenges facing children and families, the decline of urban infrastructures and risks to our environment.

As a fundamental concern to the residents of my riding, as to all Canadians, the health care issue must be resolved once and for all. The ideas outlined in today's Speech from the Throne will reassure Canadians that they will not lose the high quality of universal health care to which they have become accustomed.

Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is home to many working class Canadians and I am sensitive to the issues surrounding children and their families. As a former school trustee, I am well acquainted with the obstacles young families have to face. The Speech from the Throne proposes solid measures to continue to build on plans which allow all children to start life on an equal footing and give them a fair chance of succeeding in school.

*The Address**[Translation]*

The riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is made up of two former municipalities, now districts, in Greater Montreal. It is physically cut in two by boulevard Métropolitain, an elevated, narrow, outmoded and dangerous stretch of road which is part of the Trans-Canada Highway.

The problem of neglected or non-existent roads is not limited to my riding. It is a problem throughout the country. A strategy such as the one outlined in the throne speech to promote the renewal and development of our road system is vital to the rapid and safe movement of people and goods and to the economic future of our country.

[English]

I am delighted to see that today's throne speech strengthens our government's previous commitments of addressing these critical social issues.

I remain firm in the conviction that governments must take the lead in addressing fundamental social issues, such as assisting children and families in need, guaranteeing equal access to quality education, safeguarding our universal health care system for all Canadians, pursuing a plan to sustain our cities and ensuring that the environment in which we work, live, play, grow our food and raise our families is free from the threat of contaminants. The proposed solutions laid out in today's Speech from the Throne are in line with core values which will benefit all Canadians in the short and long term.

[Translation]

I am pleased to see that our government has taken the fiscally responsible approach by putting forward these proposals rather than falling into the trap of believing that the only way to improve the system is by increasing spending. Through this approach, we are able to respect a balanced budget by adapting current legislation.

[English]

Against expectations that are contrary to other nations, our economy continues to be strong. Yet we cannot allow ourselves to be led into a false sense of security. We must continue our course to reduce taxes and reduce the national debt. In doing so we will be an even wealthier nation tomorrow for today's sacrifices.

[Translation]

I move, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, that the following motion be presented to Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada:

To Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

May it please Your Excellency:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the House of Commons of Canada, in parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

● (1600)

[English]

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to second the motion for the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Her Excellency the Governor General has once again done an admirable job of presenting the government's agenda to Parliament and to the people of Canada.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Prime Minister for providing me the privilege of addressing not only members of this House but, indeed, on an occasion like this, the people of Canada from coast to coast to coast.

As we moved back to this chamber from the Senate I could not help but think of the symbolism that is presented to the world when the Governor General reads a Speech from the Throne.

To me the Speech from the Throne represents one of the most cherished aspects of democracy. It is clearly a demonstration of a democratically elected body of members presenting their plan to the people of Canada.

We often take for granted the right to develop policies, to debate these policies and to adjust and amend them for the good of all. We of course have struggled to develop such a free and open process.

Thousands of Canadians have contributed to the process. People, such as Louis Riel, Nellie McClung, J. S. Woodsworth, John Diefenbaker and Pierre Elliott Trudeau, have challenged the Canadian government on more than one occasion. Remarkably, two of them ultimately became prime minister.

In general our parliamentary system serves us well. It needs changes from time to time and we will undertake such changes, but I am very proud of the system of government that has evolved across the country and honoured to have a part in it.

When I first spoke in the House in response to the 2001 throne speech, I spoke of my riding of Winnipeg South Centre. I spoke of its cultural and community diversity; the fact that it is made up of low, middle and high income families; of privilege and poverty; of student, seniors and young families of every configuration living and working together; and that it is truly a microcosm of the challenges and strengths of urban Canada.

In the riding of Winnipeg South Centre another wonderful symbol of democracy has once again risen: restored and gloriously golden. I speak of Manitoba's Golden Boy atop the dome of the provincial legislature. The newly refurbished Golden Boy will soon be formally rededicated as part of Manitoba's celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

In the meantime, the Boy stands again as a golden symbol of the west and I invite all members of the House to come and visit.

Cradled in the arm of Golden Boy is another prairie symbol, a sheaf of wheat. Today and for many days to come the farmers of the Prairies are on the fields combining the wheat that eventually feeds millions of Canadians and, indeed, much of the world.

The Address

However this fall is not the same as others. This fall many families will be looking at grain bins that remain empty as the crop has failed in their area. We in the west consider the collapse of the crops as seriously, or more so, as the business community considers a tumbling stock market. It is critical that the west maintain its strong agricultural economy but it is also critical that the west diversify as much as possible to cushion the blows of a poor agricultural year.

I am very pleased that Western Economic Diversification Canada is working to build a stronger, more inclusive and diversified economy in western Canada to the benefit of all Canadians. Throughout its 15 year history of investing in the west, WD has fostered innovation, supported entrepreneurship and worked to build communities that are sustainable both socially and economically.

Today the department is well positioned to play a central role in achieving the goals set out in the Speech from the Throne.

Canadians realize that new technology and new products are a key to growth. The government is committed to assist in moving the creations of raw research to the marketplace by working with both researchers and entrepreneurs. Support for the indirect costs for research will be an important factor for universities in Manitoba, along with others across the country. Increased funding to granting councils for graduate students and research will also be much welcomed.

• (1605)

A measure of success for any organization involved with financing, be it the government or our own families, is following a budget and remaining clear of debt. Canada is now in a position, thanks to our fiscal programs implemented in the past as promised, that our economy is growing faster than any other G-8 country and is creating more jobs. The throne speech lays out how we will pursue equally important social planning within a fiscally responsible framework.

Good environmental policy is good economic policy, good health policy and good social policy. Most Canadians are concerned about a host of environmental issues but the foremost issue of the day is that of climate change.

In Manitoba one of the most telling examples of the effect of climate change is that of the opening of winter roads. The winter roads are vital to so many first nations communities. Everything from fuel to food is brought in by winter road. Climate change is harming the ability to supply these communities. Last fall the provincial climate change task force reported that Manitobans were concerned about climate change and, most important, support the Kyoto accord.

A made in Canada solution to climate change must be pursued to achieve our made in Canada targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The federal government will provide a framework for action which, among other things, maximizes innovation and new technology and ensures that meeting targets is shared fairly between regions of the country and sectors of the economy.

The government's recognition of the need for a 10 year long infrastructure program demonstrates a commitment to assisting our urban communities, now populated by 80% of Canada's people. New roads, support for a safe, responsible transportation system, and

more support for affordable housing will inevitably contribute to the economy and social climate of cities.

The government and this throne speech proposes to continue the process of improving the life chances of first nations. Western Canadians, along with all Canadians, will welcome these programs to provide increased opportunities for Canada's first peoples in their own communities.

During the summer I had the opportunity to visit a number of first nations communities in Manitoba while accompanying my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

At Norway House we participated in a most unique sod turning ceremony. The minister had the honour of igniting an explosion that reduced many tonnes of solid rock to fragments in seconds. It is the site of what will become the third largest school in Manitoba, an example of population growth in first nations, the level of commitment of the federal government to education in first nations and the difficulty of construction in a rugged terrain.

While visiting in Fisher River and at Norway House first nations, I saw firsthand the importance of programs such as Aboriginal Business Canada and the strength of these communities committed to economic and social capacity building and responsible governance.

The announcement of support for targeted training programs for aboriginal and Inuit will resonate loudly in the west and will have a great impact for first nations people in northern Manitoba.

The government also speaks to the importance of assisting and improving the transition of many first nations peoples from the reserves to urban settings.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My hon. colleague from Manitoba has the floor but it is becoming very difficult to listen to what she has to say. I wonder how many conversations have been going on at the same time in the House.

The Speaker: There is a certain level of noise in the chamber. Of course, the Chair, who is sitting close to the hon. member, is having no trouble hearing. However perhaps hon. members who wish to carry on other discussions can do so elsewhere. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre does have the floor.

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, our prairie cities are being provided a golden opportunity to educate and train a new workforce. This influx of young people eager to work and contribute will enhance the diversity of our cities even as they remain closely tied to their traditional communities and families.

Eventually every prairie city of significant size, along with other cities across the country, will experience the arrival of the urban aboriginal.

Accordingly, as we debate the merits and problems of renewing urban infrastructure, we must also plan and address the issues surrounding the urban aboriginal strategy, especially in western Canada.

The Address

By working together with the provincial and city governments, the service providers of first nations and the Métis federations, we must overcome the difficulties and roadblocks and improve, not only the life chances of aboriginal people but as well the life chances of our cities.

It is imperative that we stop protecting departmental turf and hiding behind the cloak of jurisdiction. It is critical that all involved promote interdepartmental integration, intergovernmental cooperation and interagency communications. Without this any significant change will be constrained and all our communities will be poorer for it.

What we do today to ensure that aboriginal peoples have the foundation to fully participate in Canada's prosperity well into the future will be critical to the continued growth of the nation.

In my very first speech in this chamber I spoke of my desire to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Our government proposes in this throne speech to build on and enlarge its commitment to the youngest members of society.

As the Prime Minister stated recently, "There are too many children who are not getting a good start in life." I am pleased today to see that we have further plans being put in place to address the issue. I am heartened to see the proposed reform of the Criminal Code to increase the penalties for abuse and neglect.

Recently I met with the president of an important Manitoba organization who told me of driving by the Freighthouse Community Centre in the heart of downtown Winnipeg. He said that it was a very hot day and the swimming pool was open but so overcrowded that a line of children was reaching down the block from the pool, all waiting for a turn in the cool water. It saddened him and it saddens me. If what it takes is more or better facilities, like pools for kids to simply be kids, we must work harder to meet such needs.

This example of a pool in the inner city of Winnipeg could be simply designated as a municipal issue, but I believe this problem presents an opportunity for what I spoke of earlier. The need for intergovernmental and interagency cooperation through infrastructure negotiations at many levels is clearly demonstrated and a cooperative result could benefit the kids we see lined up at the pool.

The government has not ceased in its efforts to reduce the number of children living in poverty. In 1996 the percentage of children living in poverty in this country stood at 20.4%. By 1999 we have managed to reduce this number to 17.2%, an improvement but there is still much to be done.

The additional federal support promised in today's throne speech for programs like the national child benefit, increased access to quality child care and early childhood learning opportunities, the very successful headstart program, and the early childhood initiative will provide increased opportunities for children. The focusing of these programs to poor families will have a significant impact on the lives of many children, to say nothing of their parents.

I want to make particular note that the health issue of fetal alcohol syndrome will be receiving more funding for both the prevention and treatment of those children at risk.

The Prime Minister has said many times that all children should have the opportunity to be the best that they can be. I am proud to be associated with a government that continues to strive to achieve such a goal.

● (1610)

I am passionate about the need to ensure the west's continued growth. I am also passionate about realizing the ambitions and fulfilling the dreams of those countless pioneers and visionaries who extended Canada's domain to the western sea, who in their time made western Canada a breadbasket to the world, and who, in our time, have provided some of the major engines of national as well as regional growth, development and prosperity.

Fulfilling that dream will require us to grapple with many issues, some of which I have already touched on, but there are more, one of which is immigration. Put simply, the west wants, indeed the west needs, more people. Western Canada was a multicultural society long before the word multicultural entered our everyday language. In Canada we in the west consider ourselves the pioneers of multiculturalism.

Last December the Governor General in a speech to the Canadian Club in Winnipeg, while speaking of Winnipeg but with application elsewhere in the Prairies, said:

Manitoba was, and remains, the microcosm of multicultural life together. Here we see the triumph of individual character and sheer will to survive. Here we see the triumph of a different vision of society, one that is egalitarian, diverse, multicultural.... Here we see the cradle of the great Canadian experiment in people of all backgrounds living together in relative harmony and toleration.

We in the west will continue to welcome people from any and every part of the globe to western Canada. In my own community of Winnipeg South Centre there are community agencies actively recruiting new Canadians, be they from Argentina, the Philippines, Eastern Europe or elsewhere.

One of the major hurdles facing new immigrants when they arrive in this country is the recognition of their overseas credentials. Canadians will be pleased to see the government committed to addressing the barriers to the recognition of international credentials.

I spoke earlier of the need for a new workforce. Immigrants will be part of this workforce. The fast tracking of skilled workers with jobs identified in Canada will assist agencies in their recruitment. The aggressive recruitment of talented students and workers at home and abroad will be welcomed. I am also pleased to see targeted measures for children of recent immigrants to learn French and English and many supports for their families.

In two weeks, I am proud to say, Winnipeg will be host to the first provincial immigration ministers conference. What more fitting place than the gateway to the west for a conference on immigration?

The Laurier government of the first decades of the 20th century populated the west. Let us continue that grand work in these new decades of the 21st century.

The Address

Over the past few months I, like many others in the House, have consulted widely with constituents, communities, health care providers and others in our respective communities. It is clear that people are concerned about the health care system. They are concerned about the costs. They are concerned about having enough health care professionals. They are concerned about their ability to access the system. They are concerned about the lack of preventive measures. They are concerned about the long term viability of our system.

One thing they all agree on is the need for change. They support the Romanow commission and they are looking to the government to address the issues and present viable alternatives.

Today's throne speech reaffirms the commitment of holding a first ministers conference on health care in early 2003 after the Romanow report is presented to the government. The government's openness to reform will be applauded by all Canadians.

The issues involved with the provision of health care across the country are many and complex. Today's commitment by the government to a comprehensive plan for reform, to strong preventive measures and to the required long term investments are what Canadians have been looking for. The government's action on health promotion and disease prevention in cooperation with partners concerning the many first nations is noteworthy and most timely.

•(1615)

In closing, I wish to say to all members in the House that we occupy a unique and privileged position. As the representatives of citizens in a democracy, we are here to consider and debate the issues of the day, to plan to the best of our abilities and to pursue policies for the benefit and well-being of our people.

This is a great country despite the naysayers who have been highly vocal in recent times. Being a great country, it deserves the very best of our time, our talents and our energy.

I look forward to continuing to work not only with my colleagues here in government, but with members of all parties who are here representing our citizens in all their diversity from every part of Canada. Therefore it is with both humility and pride that I second the motion on the Address in Reply to the Speech From the Throne.

•(1620)

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, over the next six days I look forward to debating many of the issues that the member for Winnipeg South Centre raised in her speech.

I did note with interest her comment that our democratic system needs changes from time to time. In saying that, she would seem to have a lot in common with the member for LaSalle—Émard who toured the country this summer promoting the idea that there is a democratic deficit in this place and it must be fixed as soon as possible less tragedy occur.

I would like to ask the hon. member, at the first possible opportunity, say, at the election of the chairmanship of the committees that we will have to go through in the next few weeks, would she support secret ballot elections? I would like to know if she agrees with that or not.

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, the member has raised an important issue. Like others in this House, I would be most pleased to take it under consideration.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that she takes all kinds of things under advisement, but surely when a member of Parliament has been in this place as long as she has been, it would seem to me she would have certainly formulated some opinions as well as her party platform. It is always safe to stay on platform.

I would like her to make some reference to the red book, which the member for LaSalle—Émard takes great credit in writing, and also ask her for her comments on what she thinks the party policy of the government is and why it is that she is going to take that under advisement. Why can she not just advise us right now what her plan on that is?

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, I must confess that I had some difficulty in hearing the hon. member's question. If I heard it correctly, I think I would like to follow in her footsteps on the matter of pensions and take the matter under advisement and think it through carefully.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have now returned from our summer break during which the House was prorogued. Valuable time was lost because of the delayed resumption and there is no justification for that. That is hard to believe.

Since the 1994 throne speech the government has been making promises again and again, recycling them, and the promises have been broken again and again. I would like to ask the hon. member why the promises are being recycled. Why does the government have to break them and crush them?

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, at the risk of being quoted by a former member, I do not accept the member's assumption that they have been broken. I think that the throne speech allows us to build on past accomplishments. We look forward to doing this.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question for the member who talked about a lot of issues in her speech.

In the time that the Governor General was reading the Prime Minister's speech, and from beginning to end it was an hour and a half, members of the armed forces were standing outside in the pouring rain, freezing cold.

We have more armed forces in more theatres than ever before in Canadian history. We are at war and the throne speech made no commitment whatsoever to our armed forces. How can the member possibly defend that record?

•(1625)

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, the throne speech did indeed make reference to the armed forces. The government is committed to developing a plan to support the armed forces even further.

Like other members of the House, I have much to do with the armed forces in our communities. I can only speak to the best that they can do as we salute and support them.

The Address

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting debate. I am sure this part is just about over, but at the risk of rejecting the premise of the response to the question, I wonder if the hon. member would care to comment on the idea that the House needs an independent ethics counsellor who reports not to the Prime Minister, but to the House as a whole. Would she think that would be a good idea or does she have to consult, think about it or ponder the issue?

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, like all members of the House, I think anything that we bring in requires thought and consultation. I believe that the ethics package that will be brought forward by the government will be first rate. All members of the House will be satisfied and pleased with the content.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I noticed in particular that the Speech from the Throne mentioned access to college and university and access to a lifelong education. I wonder what the member's thoughts are about that.

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, finally there is a good question. I am hearing to my left "warm and fuzzy" but I want to thank the member for Peterborough for a useful and important question. The question of access to education is an important issue for all young people, whether they are in cities, rural areas or first nations communities. Every effort the government can make to enhance and support opportunities for young people to learn will be applauded.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with care to the hon. member's remarks.

Along with the glaring omissions for the military, seniors, students, fisheries and agriculture, I am wondering why the hon. member might surmise there was no commitment by the government for a reduction in student debt. There was reference to grad students and to research. Why was there nothing found in the throne speech or in any budget for reducing the massive student debt that is driving students out of this country?

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, the throne speech indicated tremendous support for education for young people, whatever their background. The question of reducing student debt is important, but the provision of additional funds for graduate students to do their research and to attain post-graduate degrees is important also and is very much highlighted in the speech.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to me that the hon. member from Winnipeg must be a very effective member because she is certainly attracting a lot of attention from the opposition members. They are trying to throw her off her speech but she is handling these questions like a real pro. Well done. All the attention is because she has the answers, but she also contributed to the answers.

I would like the hon. member to comment as to whether she feels that the Speech from the Throne will make a positive impact in her

community, in her city, in her province and in her region. There are many elements to the Speech from the Throne. What impacts positively on her region?

An hon. member: Reject the premise of the question.

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, I am not rejecting the premise of his question.

This is indeed an important speech for my community, for my immediate community of Winnipeg South Centre, for the larger community of the city of Winnipeg in which I live and certainly for the province of Manitoba.

There are many things in this Speech from the Throne that Manitobans, wherever they live, have been looking for, such as the support to cities and infrastructure. The support to children is widely applauded throughout the community, as is the support for immigration, which I spoke of. The plan for a strategy on the military is welcomed in my community. There are many issues, and unless members would like me to repeat my whole speech—

An hon. member: More, more.

The Speaker: It might be that the members would like it, but we are not going to have that now because the time for questions and comments, all hon. members will be disappointed to know, has now expired.

• (1630)

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

The Speaker: Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 4.32 p.m.)

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