

Mr. Witer: Today I have been given the opportunity to speak on the Throne Speech, a task I undertake with conviction and confidence. The Throne Speech is not a detailed plan of action, it is a statement of intent. Therefore, a true assessment of the impact of a Throne Speech can only be determined by an examination of the Government's record following the speech.

On November 4, 1984, the Governor General presented the first Throne Speech of this Government setting a theme of national reconciliation, economic renewal and social justice. In the 23 months following that speech, much has already been accomplished toward those goals, even as we recognize the long road ahead, if we are to achieve the lofty aims that we have set for ourselves. That is why I am especially pleased to see that last week's Throne Speech did not forget the promises we made, but renewed our commitment to achieving their fulfilment.

One of the important commitments made in both speeches was the achievement of economic equality for women. In order to allow women the opportunity to attain their full economic potential, we must ensure that women have equal access to employment and opportunities to advance to the most senior levels of management. The adoption of the employment equity principle outlined in the Abella Report is a prime example of the Government's commitment to full equality for women. We have acted to ensure that Crown corporations, federally regulated businesses and private companies which have contracted to do business with the Government give women better job opportunities. In just two years the Government has increased the percentage of women appointed to federal boards and commissions to over 25 per cent from the previous Government's record of 15 per cent. Our Government has made good on its commitment to improving economic opportunities for women in Canada. The facts speak for themselves. Since September, 1984 unemployment among women has fallen by 90,000, a record on which this Government is seeking to build.

The future of young Canadians is being addressed as well. We have dedicated ourselves to working with the provinces and the private sector to enhance job opportunities for our young people. We are committed to encourage initiative and the entrepreneurial spirit among the youth. A few months ago I received a letter from a young student who was interested in pursuing a career in scientific research. He requested my advice on the likelihood of career opportunities in his chosen field. Looking to the Throne Speech, I answer him with a resounding yes. There is a future for those seeking a career in the scientific or high-tech fields. We have committed ourselves to expanding opportunities for the future. Once again, the figures confirm our commitment to Canadian youth. The record shows that since September, 1984, unemployment among youth has fallen by 109,000. We are backing up our promises with action.

The Address—Mr. Witer

Parkdale—High Park is an urban riding with a population of approximately 92,000. While the unemployment rate in our constituency runs at about 4.7 per cent, we do not consider ourselves to be free of difficulties. We have worked hard to achieve that rate, and the response to my householder questionnaire indicates that unemployment is one of the single most important concerns of my constituents.

There is no doubt that we have benefited from programs such as the Canadian Jobs Strategy and Challenge 86 which have contributed to our relatively low unemployment rate. Since 1985, the Government has allocated \$900 million over and above the resources already available for training and employment programs to implement the Canadian Jobs Strategy. During the past two years, the total number of unemployed has dropped by 215,000, with the unemployment rate dropping a full 2 percentage points from 11.7 per cent in September, 1984, to 9.7 per cent in August, 1986. The Government recognizes that those percentage points translate into real people who face very serious hardship in providing for the needs of their families. Whether the rate of unemployment is 9.7 or 4.7, Canadians deserve and demand the right to provide for their needs with dignity. Percentage points are insignificant to someone who does not have a job.

In the 23 months since our election we have created 563,000 jobs, 80 per cent of which are full time. The OECD forecasts that Canada will have the largest rate of employment growth of any major industrialized nation this year. That is the record of our Government, the record on which this Throne Speech promises to build.

The Government has recognized in this Throne Speech and, indeed, in the previous one, that Canada does not exist in a vacuum. We cannot hope to create the economic opportunities we seek for Canada without looking to our trading partners. That is why we have undertaken negotiations with the United States to open up opportunities for freer trade between our two nations. We are determined to open up trade opportunities not only in the United States but with Japan and other Pacific Rim countries.

Our efforts to attract investment to Canada as a source of jobs has not gone unrewarded. In the automotive sector alone since 1985, Hyundai, Toyota, Honda and General Motors have all announced plans to build plants in Canada. We are committed to building on these success stories by continuing to encourage investment and development in Canada.

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Our involvement in the international community brings with it responsibility and opportunity. The Throne Speech underscores our efforts to take an active role in world affairs. In 1988, leaders of the seven major industrialized nations will meet in Canada for the annual economic summit. Our admission to the Group of Seven has given Canada a unique opportunity to take a leading role in world economic affairs.