

The Address—Mr. Fretz

the individual Canadian. The emphasis of government will return to the recognition and reaffirmation of the fact that individual rights are the cornerstone of our democracy.

In my opening remarks, Mr. Speaker, I made mention of the riding of Erie, the constituency I am pleased and honoured to represent here today. In the tradition of maiden speeches, it is my pleasant task to acquaint the members of the House with Erie riding.

As is obvious from the name, we are situated on one of the greatest of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie. Our eastern boundary is defined by the Niagara River which has its beginnings here, as does much of the history of early Canada. Many battles of the war of 1812 took place on the soil of what is now Erie riding. Our early settlers had their numbers swelled by United Empire Loyalists and my own forebears came to this region in 1800.

Not only has the area been blessed with tremendous beauty and historical significance, but we are justly famous for our fresh produce, abundant orchards, and flavourful vineyards. Our fertile soil and temperate climate make the Niagara region one of the best grape growing regions in the world, and form the basis of Canada's wine industry. I am sure that yesterday as we celebrated Thanksgiving many of us had turkey and chicken from the riding of Erie.

We also share the Niagara River with the United States and have one of the gateways between that great country and ours. Over 150 years of friendship with the United States are epitomized by the bridge that links our two nations, the Peace Bridge. Being on an international boundary has also been a great advantage in teaching our citizens that great Canadian pastime—smuggling.

● (1730)

Proximity to our American neighbours and the lush beauty of our region have made the Niagara peninsula and Erie riding a natural gathering place for many hundreds of thousands of tourists each year. Tourism plays a major role in the economy of Erie as, in fact, it does in all Canada. The announcement by the Prime Minister of a national tourism strategy is indeed a most welcome proposal.

One of the prominent man-made features of Erie is the Welland Canal, which is 27 miles long, an integral part of the St. Lawrence Seaway and an important facet of our regional economy. Studies by the Niagara regional chamber of commerce have shown that the economic impact of the Welland Canal and the Canadian Great Lakes shipping industry is growing steadily with more than \$180 million flowing into the Niagara region annually. The St. Lawrence Seaway Authority alone provides more than 650 jobs while over 3,000 local residents find employment on the ships themselves. The operation of the canal, movement of cargo and construction and repair of ships remain the dominant part of the industry's effect on my riding, yet numerous smaller companies depend on ships and shipping for their existence. These suppliers and contractors provide services essential to the maintenance and operation of the 170 Canadian flag vessels which regularly use

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the Welland Canal. It is in this context that I was most pleased to learn of the Prime Minister's intention to set up a seaway advisory council to maintain and improve the viability of this industry which is so important to our region and to the whole country.

The people of Erie riding reflect in both their ethnic make-up and their geographical distribution a common bond with the rest of Canada. The urban areas of Erie are close to the American border while the agricultural and less populated areas are to the north. Aside from this physical similarity to Canada as a whole, the people of Erie through their background and heritage echo the history of our great land. Representatives of our two founding nations dwell here, as do representatives of other nations from all around the world. These people have seen the promise that is Canada and have moved here to realize that promise. Whatever reasons have impelled them to come to Canada, leaving their native lands, whether flight from adversity or a longing for freedom or a sense of adventure, these new Canadians have flocked in their thousands over the years to find that dream, to slake their spirit of adventure, to live in freedom. And they have made Canada, including Erie riding, what it is today, a vibrant, forward-looking land that has taken the strands of diverse experience and culture and woven them into a new, stronger entity, a land and people who are more than the sum of their parts, a land and people who have prospered by recognizing and capitalizing upon their differences. Erie is the living proof that diversity is an asset and I am sure its people join with me in applauding the Prime Minister on his appreciation of that fact. Our multicultural heritage is one of Canada's greatest resources.

In Erie, the people reflect traditional values which were perhaps overlooked by the previous administration. They believe that initiative should be encouraged and rewarded, that a good day's work deserves fair compensation, that individuals should take responsibility for their own lives and that government should impose as little as possible upon the governed. What is good for the individual is good for the country. We can regain our independence. We can depend upon ourselves. We will cease to turn to Big Daddy to solve our problems with the big dollar which inevitably leads to the big deficit. It is a truism to say that one best appreciates something one has worked for—that if the object of desire is given on a silver platter, it is not valued as highly. There is a vast, untapped resource in Canada, with more good ideas than any army of well-paid bureaucrats could produce. It stands to reason that 22 million people will have more ideas and be better in tune with their own needs than self-appointed experts in Ottawa.

The volunteer sector is the perfect expression of a nation's responsibility to itself. Witness the groundswell of support and sympathy for the Indo-Chinese refugees; people organized themselves, set up their own committees, found their own answers and are responding on a one to one level with each other and with those they have been moved to sponsor. Surely this is a more human and more humane way of dealing with each other—to remove the faceless interference from above