

*The Address—Mr. Richardson*

On the eve of a new decade and, soon of a new century, Canadians look to the future with confidence.

When it came to power in 1984, our Government made those many years that were clouded by the mistrust and lack of understanding that poisoned federal-provincial relations and even threatened the unity of our country a thing of the past. It also made the important decisions and took the decisive action necessary to launch economic recovery and create the jobs that form the foundation of our prosperity. It has increased Canada's influence on the international scene and developed in our own country the kind of programs that guarantee genuine social justice.

In the last election Canadians again gave us their massive support and shortly afterwards, during the first session of this thirty-fourth Parliament, the Government asked this House to adopt the Free Trade Agreement with the United States which, while protecting two million Canadian jobs that depend on our exports to the United States, will open new horizons for Canadian business and industry.

Yesterday, the Speech from the Throne outlined the policies the Government intends to pursue during its mandate. Its priorities draw their inspiration from the new maturity and confidence that Canadians have developed during the past four years.

Canadians today are clearly aware they will have to put their shoulders to the wheel to support and develop our prosperity and to meet the challenges the future will bring.

Economic expansion is the only way to maintain the social programs we all want in this country, while achieving a better balance between expenditures and revenues is essential to economic stability and sustained growth.

Our country, which is still young, was built by men and women of various origins, united by the common goals of prosperity, peace and unity. We are all the grateful heirs of those pioneers who left us this magnificent heritage, this country which is Canada. Pioneer blood still flows through our veins. We too want to leave our children and our grandchildren a country that is even more prosperous, more open, more tolerant and more united.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to have the privilege of seconding the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. In doing so, I support with enthusiasm the inspiring mission—on which this Government has embarked, which is to further develop Canada's prosperity and unity and prepare today for an even more impressive future.

I am particularly proud to take part in this endeavour as a Member for Montreal and a citizen of Quebec.

At the beginning of the 80s, Mr. Speaker, Quebec's outlook seemed very bleak indeed. The economy was at its worst, and we also suffered the supreme humiliation of being denied our place in the Canadian constitutional family.

Mr. Speaker, Québec had been wounded in its honour and in its dignity and all its people deeply felt that hurt. Montréal, our largest city, the heart of Québec, was badly affected by those years of economic stagnation and political uncertainty. Everywhere the outlook seemed dark. Unemployment was rampant in almost every sector of the economy. Crushing interest rates were a source of anxiety for families and our young people worried about their future. Something drastic had to be done. What was needed was a new team of men and women determined to take their future in their own hands and to give back to the people of Québec their hope and their pride.

This team gathered around a man who is proud of his native province, Québec, and full of ambition for his country, Canada. Today, he is Canada's Prime Minister. After restoring harmony and prosperity to this country, he is now asking us to show, more than ever before, our dedication to our country and to the well-being of its citizens.

If we want to prevent the spiralling interest rates and high levels of unemployment we experienced at the beginning of the 80s, we must reduce the national debt burden. This debt, which previous governments allowed to reach dangerous proportions, is today a millstone around the necks of all Canadians.

In my own city of Montreal, the indications are obvious that the economy has recovered and that the men and women of Montreal can once again put their energies and creativity to good use.