

*Multiculturalism**[Translation]*

Multiculturalism must now be recognized as a vital resource in the on-going creation of our society. What I mean is that we must recognize the vitality, strength and vision of all Canadians. There are many ways of being Canadian, expressing the unity derived from our common values and citizenship. We have succeeded in creating unity from unbelievable diversity.

[English]

Unity is what multiculturalism is all about. Our many cultural heritages and traditions lie at the heart of what we are and what we have become as an independent nation. Together they form our distinct and individual identity.

The new Department responds to the diversity of our society. For me, that means that every Canadian must have the chance to participate in our society on an equal basis with the same chance to progress through our education system, to get a job, to run for public office, to have equal access to social and health services, and receive fair treatment under our justice system. In this sense, Canadian diversity means setting a standard for the quality of life of all Canadians in all parts of this country.

[Translation]

Promoting the dignity and well-being of the Canadian people is promoting the well being of all peoples, in view of our common humanity and of the deep respect we share for human life. But if Canadians today and tomorrow are to efficiently work within the global community, we must start at home. Ensuring active participation by and equality of Canadians in a diverse society in the area of language and heritage is something that will not happen by itself.

[English]

And so the Government must work with all sectors of society to bring about change. It must encourage the contribution of the voluntary sector which plays such a vital role in the practice of our freedoms, reminding us again and again how much Canadians can help other Canadians.

Last September 15 the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) announced his intention to establish the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship. He gave me the responsibility to develop it. It has been one of my greatest privileges to do this, to nurture this concept and help

find ways in which Canadians can work together to shape the Canada of tomorrow.

Let me remind you of the Prime Minister's vision of this new tomorrow when he spoke to Canadians from Baie Comeau on election night. He said then:

—the confederation of tomorrow, the Canada of the 1990s (is) a land of promise, a people of hope, a tolerant society, a prosperous country uniquely blessed among the nations of the earth.

[Translation]

As mentioned in the Throne Speech, all Federal Ministers have a duty to help prepare the emergence of that viable and dynamic Canada. The legislation now before us is the symbol of that vision and the way in which, as a nation made up of people from all over the world, we will meet the challenges of a new century.

[English]

This Bill is about the future of Canada. The Department that it will establish will seek the best and encourage the best of what we are as a people. It is with great pride that I begin this debate, Mr. Speaker, and I urge Members on all sides of the Chamber to join with me in support of this statute. I pledge to all Members that I will work with them, listen to them, co-operate with them in genuine partnership, and I seek the assurance of all Members to do the same.

I hope that we can move rapidly here today and get this Bill to a legislative committee before we rise for the summer. Over the course of the summer months members of a legislative committee will have the opportunity to start thinking about how they will proceed in the fall to review it and return their report as soon as we come back in the fall.

We are here as citizens of a democratic and pluralistic society. Each and every one of us in this Chamber is here because people in our communities look to us for leadership. We are here as parliamentarians who have the opportunity to assist in building a better, stronger and more confident Canada. This is a task that must be accomplished together.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent): Mr. Speaker, as multiculturalism spokesperson with my colleague for Broadview—Greenwood (Mr. Mills), I am pleased to rise in this debate today. This debate is vital to Canada's happy and peaceful future. Indeed, the debate on Bill C-18 is more than a debate revolving around the establishment of a department of multiculturalism. Not only must we establish the administrative structure needed to implement the policies and programs to promote multiculturalism, but we must provide them