

The Address

smallest ever. We cut \$10 million from the offices of ministers and we reduced the size of the Prime Minister's Office.

• (1635)

Last Sunday the whip introduced a program to give a good example of where this institution has decided to cut by \$5 million the expenses that we have to incur as a Parliament. In the week since then we moved immediately to implement the national infrastructure program. In fact this month we will sign infrastructure agreements with every province and projects to put people back to work will get started in a matter of days and weeks.

We sought and received improvements to enable Canada to sign NAFTA. We helped to negotiate a GATT agreement that opens new horizons for increased exports abroad and increased jobs at home.

We reviewed the Pearson airport deal and cancelled it because it did not serve the interests of taxpayers.

We appointed a new Governor of the Bank of Canada.

We levelled with Canadians about the size of the deficit that we generated and about the huge debt that we will have to carry and we set up a new consultative process for the next budget.

In our first meeting with provincial premiers we began work on such issues as eliminating interprovincial trade barriers, ending duplication between levels of government and reforming the tax system, including replacing the GST.

[Translation]

We have done all that in a little over two months. Each of these measures is linked to a specific promise made during the electoral campaign. And now, in the Speech from the Throne, we are continuing to keep our promises. In fact, I was quite pleased to read the headline in *La Presse* this morning; there had been others like it during the campaign that had been just as positive.

The Speech from the Throne, like this government's mandate, originates from the red book, the title of which is *Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada*. We have provided Canadians with an action plan. We have run the risk of submitting a complete and detailed plan of action. We have done what no other party had ever done before.

Canadians are not afraid to go off the beaten path. They were not expecting miracles either. What they want and deserve is a government capable of taking up difficult challenges.

[English]

During the campaign I called it realistic hope for a better future for themselves and their children, for a prosperous economy in which they can contribute, for a society that is compassionate and caring, for communities that are safe and

decent, for a government that represents them, that believes in the same things they do.

Canadians opted for realistic hope for the future and they invested their hopes in this government. On behalf of the men and women who were elected to form this government I would like to tell the Canadian people we will not let them down. What we will do is work to respect what we said to the Canadian people we were going to do.

• (1640)

This throne speech marks an important step in renewing the faith of Canadians in their institution. The agenda is ambitious but it is doable and it is the agenda Canadians have chosen. We must build on the goodwill and the renewed confidence in institutions that the government's actions have created among Canadians. The people of Canada said loudly and clearly during the election that they want to return integrity and honesty to government.

The government understands that desire and will act on it with concrete measures early in this session. We have already sent very important signals. The work of the Hon. Mitchell Sharp is a powerful message to Canadians that government can be a force for good in society, that public life is a very honourable calling and that we are here to serve others, not ourselves. That is how we intend to conduct ourselves throughout our mandate.

However it is not enough to clean up the system. Canadians voted for something more. They voted to return power to the elected representatives here in the House of Commons. We made commitments to the Canadian people to give the House and members of Parliament new relevance so that it once again becomes the focus of political debate and decision making in our government.

The government House leader will bring forward changes to the rules and practices of this place. We will give a much greater role to parliamentary committees.

[Translation]

I have asked the finance committee to come up with alternatives to the GST. Later on in the year, I will ask that they be closely associated with pre-budget consultations. The government will ask the parliamentary committees to submit our strategic policy as it relates to foreign relations and defence to a thorough examination.

This government is serious about the need for real political debates to be held in this House before decisions are made.

Earlier, during question period, the Minister of Finance suggested that a pre-budget debate be held in the House of Commons to allow the members to express their views on the coming budget, and I wish to commend him for that initiative.