

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The 10-minute period for questions and answers has expired.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I will change directions. Perhaps if the Hon. Minister stays, we could have that exchange later. Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members of the House of Commons, I am honoured to have this opportunity to address the House as we debate the Speech from the Throne. As I begin my tenure, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the electors of Mount Royal for placing their trust in me.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I want to add my personal congratulations and sincere best wishes to you on your new responsibilities. Yours will not be an easy task but you will have the confidence and respect of all Members here. I also wish to pay a special tribute to the other 26 women elected to this Parliament. Ours is the largest number ever elected in Canadian history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Finestone: Our numbers have confirmed a more acceptable and nobler meaning to the cliché, "a woman's place is in the house". I wish us all wise counsel in this House as we add our particular perspectives to those of our partners.

In speaking of a woman's place in this House, let me congratulate the Government upon its selection of a delightful young woman as the seconder to the Speech from the Throne. As well, let me offer my felicitations to the mover.

In a sense, the riding of Mount Royal needs no introduction in the House. It has a long and honourable history of sending outstanding Members to this Parliament. In the last 35 years, two men have sat in this Chamber on behalf of the people of Mount Royal. Alan MacNaughton was the Member from 1949 to 1965. He sat in your chair for three years, Mr. Speaker, and served with great distinction. The Hon. Member for Mount Royal prior to the last election was, of course, well known to all Canadians. He was the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, one of the outstanding Canadians of this century. His passion for Canada, its unity, its diversity and its future, was matched only by his passion for world peace and stability. With this tradition and legacy of leadership from Mount Royal, I am both humbled and challenged by the prospect of succeeding representatives such as these two outstanding Canadians.

My riding mirrors much of what is great in this country. The riding is composed of four sectors: Côte St. Luc, the Towns of Mount Royal and Hampstead and parts of the Montreal Districts of Snowdon and Côte-des-Neiges. About 88,000 people make their homes there, and one out of every five is over the age of 65. The Hon. Minister can understand my concern.

The major cultural group in Mount Royal is Jewish, accounting for 48 per cent of the riding. We are indeed proud that our riding is almost 60 per cent bilingual and is enriched by many diverse ethnocultural communities, weaving a wonderful multicultural tapestry. As for mother tongue, 52 per

cent are English while 21 per cent are French. As for ethnic origin, people from the four corners of the world, from the Caribbean Islands, Chile, South Africa, southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe, all make their homes here.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

In the best of Canadian traditions, cultural pluralism and social commitment are at the forefront in Mount Royal. Human rights here and throughout the world are a major concern for the members of this well-informed and generous community.

[*English*]

Internationally, the respect of the Canadian Government for human rights has been expressed in many ways; in its assistance to political refugees in Central America and to those suffering from famine in Ethiopia; in its support for Soviet Jewry; and in its support for the security of Israel. It is our voice as well in the United Nations. It is my sincere hope that the new Government maintains and enhances these vital initiatives in support of international human rights.

At home our concerns with human rights have been just as strong. Here our concerns with the rights and opportunities of individuals have properly focused on two groups of society of particular importance to my constituents and myself, women and youth. This focus must continue. There must be a continuity of purpose and action. In recent weeks, government Ministers have repeatedly talked of "sending new signals" to different groups in our society; signals to the private sector; to labour, to the Americans; to our NATO Allies; and to the world with respect to peace. I want to look to this Throne Speech to see what signals the Government is sending to the women, to the youth of Canada and to the cultural communities.

The evolution of the role of women in Canada, their growing awareness, strength and constructive action is most important. I am pleased to see that the apparent willingness of the Government to address the concerns of women is manifest. However, I must warn the Government that Canadian women—and men—will not be satisfied with words alone. Only three things are needed to follow up on the rhetoric of the Throne Speech, action, action and action. Under the Liberal government women have made great progress. This Government has a really tough act to follow.

[*Translation*]

Women can and must become full partners in our society both economically and socially. They will reach that goal not only through legislative changes, but also through changes in attitude on the part of the Canadian people and the business sector.

However, economic independence is the very basis of women's equality. We challenge the Government to follow in the footsteps of the previous Liberal Government and at least keep up the pace at which it defended the rights of women.