

## THE SENATE

Saturday, April 30, 1949

The Senate met at 11 a.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

### PROROGATION OF PARLIAMENT

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that he had received a communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Governor General, acquainting him that the Hon. Thibaudeau Rinfret, acting as Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General, would proceed to the Senate Chamber this day at 12 noon for the purpose of proroguing the present session of parliament.

### CANADA'S NATIONAL CAPITAL

#### DOCUMENTS TABLED

**Hon. Wishart McL. Robertson:** I should like to table copies in English and in French of the preliminary report by Jacques Greber, Consultant to the National Capital Planning Committee, on the plan for the National Capital. I should also like to table a memorandum by the National Capital Planning Committee which contains comments relating to the proposed plan.

The present preliminary report by Mr. Greber has been endorsed by the National Capital Planning Committee and the Federal District Commission. It was forwarded by the commission to the government only this week, and as yet the government has had no opportunity to study it. However, in view of the frequent indications by honourable members of their interest in the report and their desire to have it made public at as early a date as possible, it seems best to table it at this stage. Certain parts of the plan have been submitted separately from time to time to the government and have been approved in order that some preliminary arrangements might go forward. Information about these had been communicated to the house at various times. The present preliminary report will be followed at a later date by a final revised report, which will not differ in substance but will contain additional plans and maps.

The idea of developing the capital of Canada so as to take advantage of its splendid natural location in the City of Ottawa, and to produce a city appropriate to the stature of Canada, has engaged the attention of Canadian statesmen ever since this country became a nation. Even before confederation, a step was taken to make

the best use of this location. Sir John A. Macdonald had the vision to seize upon the commanding site of Parliament Hill for the three central buildings of the capital. His plan to use the entire hill in that way was attacked at the time as being excessively grandiose, costly, and far beyond the needs of the country. Had his critics been listened to, the capital of Canada would not occupy its present impressive situation. Sir Wilfrid Laurier established the Ottawa Improvement Commission, which subsequently became the Federal District Commission. In 1913 Sir Robert Borden set up the Holt Commission to prepare plans for the capital, but the advent of the First World War prevented its execution. Since that time the Right Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King has been the moving spirit in the project to create a better national capital. He has given generously of his assistance, counsel and encouragement, and the present report is the outcome of his initiative.

I mention the interest of these four great leaders of Canada in the development of the National Capital in order to emphasize that this is not a political or controversial matter in any way.

The plan I am tabling is not a government plan, but is a report based upon objective and expert study to determine how, in building a capital of which every Canadian will be proud, we can make the best use of what nature has provided. Perhaps I should also stress the fact that the production of the present plan is a beginning, not an end; it is a guide to help in the long-term development of the capital as it grows with the needs of Canada over many years. Plans for the National Capital have been produced before, and the capital has suffered because those plans were not followed. Each year's unplanned growth has made proper development more difficult and costly. It is to be hoped that the present plan will ensure a sound basis for future development. Co-operation from the provinces, and especially from the municipalities, will be needed. For instance, the proper zoning which is essential can only be provided by the municipalities. With co-operation and the foresight to appreciate the great development that Canada will achieve, we can undoubtedly produce one of the most beautiful capitals in the world.

**Right Hon. Mr. Mackenzie:** May I ask my honourable friend a question? I do not intend it to be embarrassing. Has the government given any indication of when, if it is returned to power—as I am sure it will be—it expects to start carrying out the plan which the honourable leader has so well outlined to this chamber?