

*The Address—Mr. McKinnon*

Capilano (Mrs. Collins) and the Hon. Member for Restigouche (Mr. Girard) indicated the very great depth of talent that the Government has in the House. I do not recall in many Speeches from the Throne ever hearing two of the calibre that we were pleased to hear yesterday.

I also want to compliment you, Mr. Speaker, on your electoral success of the other night. I believe that some provinces can hold provincial elections faster than we were able to proceed, but the results justify the length of time that was taken. I am sure that you assume your heavy duties with the best wishes of everyone in the House.

I am pleased to participate in this debate as our Government embarks on the second half of its term. It is a time when our policies are well into the implementation phase. The economic and social indicators are sending back positive signs, as well as identifying which matters need further adjustment.

The people of my riding of Victoria have sent me to Parliament five times over the last 14 years. I believe that this is because my interests and views coincide very closely to the needs and views of my constituents. A large number of people of Victoria are senior citizens—I believe about 22,500. Others are retired individuals, both civilian and military. Many of them are from other parts of western Canada.

The diversity of those in the working age group in Victoria always astonishes me. However, it reflects the basic fabric of Canadians everywhere. Much of my time and effort in Parliament has been directed toward ensuring that the social benefits of the retired population are enhanced to the extent possible and are safeguarded. I have been fortunate to have made some contributions in the areas of pensions and veterans' legislation through debate, through representation, and through a Private Members' Bill. Among my constituents, those who are retired as well as those who are still in the workforce, are many who are or have been involved in the military. I count myself in this group, having served in the Armed Forces for a considerable time. Consequently, I have always had a keen interest in our forces and in the Department of National Defence and the Government's priorities in this area, which I will expand upon later.

Every Member of Parliament must be concerned about the economic health of his or her riding and will therefore keep a watchful eye on any measures taken by the Government which affect the constituency's ability to create or sustain employment.

Victoria has had some difficult times since I have been a Member. The rate of growth of the area reflects this because, despite the benign climate, the finest in Canada, and the seaside location, the growth rate of Victoria's population in the past 15 years has been only 1.25 per cent compared with Canada's growth rate of around 14 per cent. Unemployment is very high in Victoria, at 13.3 per cent, which is above the provincial average, which is also far too high. The slow growth indicator signals a need for more employment opportunities in

Victoria. I have given a high priority to assisting the riding in that respect.

One of the problems we are facing in the direction that our future growth should take is the choice of industries that we wish to have in a city such as Victoria. We are severely disadvantaged in attempting to have any heavy industry on an island on the West Coast. The freight rates for finished products from the East and the industrialized part of eastern Canada to the West Coast are much cheaper than the freight rate from western Canada to eastern Canada for the same products. This places us at a real disadvantage. Furthermore, the shipment of heavy goods to Vancouver and the subsequent shipment to Victoria by water vessels only increases our difficulties.

That leaves us with some industries that are well suited to Victoria. Tourism is probably our best asset at the present time. Educational institutions are gradually growing and developing in Victoria, and we are becoming known for the high quality of educational institutions in our city. High technology is another area on which we can concentrate because high technology generally does not require heavy equipment and expensive freight rates.

Finally, the provincial Government is located there and we seem to have a plethora of municipal Governments. There is a continuing debate as to whether or not we should consolidate them. We have many government workers there, and I was amazed at the size of the federal contribution to government workers in Victoria, particularly when one includes Esquimalt and the naval base. It makes for a substantial payroll, which is of considerable help in our province.

In the area of tourism, we were fortunate to receive a grant from the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion, which represented a keystone for our convention centre which, believe it or not, was first considered as a project in Victoria some 80 years ago. Eventually, everyone within a considerable distance of the site of that convention centre were able to agree that it should be built. This included four municipalities which gave up their rights to grants that were being allocated by the provincial Government as an offset for Vancouver getting Expo 86, which has been so successful. However, talking four municipal Governments into giving up grants for the benefit of one municipal Government indicates the depth of co-operation that existed. One incredible gentleman, Alderman Frank Carson, spearheaded it all with the co-operation of all the municipal councils and the provincial Government. The first of the earth has been turned and we expect to have the convention centre finished sometime in 1988. We feel certain that this will be a great help to our employment problems.

● (1450)

There has been a very co-operative attitude on the part of the federal Government, not only with respect to the convention centre but with respect to other incidents with which I am sure all Hon. Members are familiar. In Victoria the Victoria Machinery Depot, which has been in business for over 100