

The year just ended has been the most productive in our nation's history. More men and women have been employed than ever before. Our harvests have been abundant. Our trade has exceeded all earlier levels. A record number of houses has been built.

Canada has enjoyed, on the whole, a high level of prosperity. Some sectors of the economy have not fully participated in this increased well-being. In particular, although sales of wheat in the past five years have been at record levels, an unprecedented series of bumper harvests has made necessary the storage of abnormal stocks of grain both in elevators and on farms. Lack of space in elevators has limited the ability of producers to deliver grain as early as usual in the marketing year. In order to provide an immediate source of funds where they may be needed, my ministers will ask you to authorize guarantees for bank loans to producers secured by their grain.

You will also be asked to authorize the Treasury to bear the cost from August 1, 1955 of storage and interest charges on wheat held by the Wheat Board over and above its normal carryover levels. As a consequence of this arrangement, returns to producers will not be depressed by carrying costs on abnormal carryover.

A higher level of employment this winter than last seems to be assured and the improvements you made to the Unemployment Insurance Act last year will provide a better coverage for those who are temporarily without work, particularly in the winter season. Various departments and agencies of government have sought to arrange their construction program to provide more employment during the winter season. It is gratifying to note that many other employers are endeavouring to follow the same policy.

In October my ministers held a conference in Ottawa with the premiers and other ministers of all the provinces to consider financial and other relations between the federal and provincial Governments. Following this useful discussion and some further correspondence, my ministers have placed before all provincial Governments a specific proposal for federal-provincial fiscal arrangements to commence next year.

The conference established a committee of ministers from all governments to consider health insurance programs and the work of this committee is now under way.

My ministers have also conferred with provincial ministers to consider and develop

an arrangement for sharing the costs of assistance to unemployed persons not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits, and in need. Detailed agreements have been submitted to the provinces. You will be asked to approve the legislation necessary to implement this program.

You will be asked to provide for the construction, jointly with the Government of Ontario, of a gas pipe line across northern Ontario from the Manitoba boundary to Kapuskasing, to be leased to Trans-Canada Pipe Lines Limited, which is to build connecting lines in western and eastern Canada. My ministers consider this government participation is necessary to make this important national project possible at this time.

You will also have laid before you amendments to the Trans-Canada Highway Act to accelerate the completion of essential links in the Trans-Canada Highway and to continue, in co-operation with provincial Governments, the work of constructing that highway up to the agreed standards.

Amendments to the National Housing Act will be laid before you. The rapid growth of our centres of population has been a spectacular feature of our national development since the last war, and in that growth wide use has been made of the National Housing Act by our citizens, particularly in suburban areas. One amendment now to be proposed is designed to increase assistance to encourage redevelopment of older sections of our cities to their best use.

Early last year the home improvement section of the act was proclaimed. It has contributed greatly toward the betterment of many existing houses. An amendment will be laid before you to increase the amounts of loans available for this purpose.

A joint committee of both houses will be proposed to review the progress and program of the Federal District Commission in developing the national capital.

In the field of industrial development you will be asked to extend the scope of the Industrial Development Bank. You will also be asked to increase the size of loans which may be made by the Canadian Farm Loan Board and to amend the Farm Improvement Loans Act.

My ministers also plan to introduce a bill to provide that women receive equal pay with men for equal work in industries which are under federal jurisdiction.