

Prorogation of Parliament

Women have been appointed to positions as Chief Justices in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, and a woman has been appointed Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.

Outside the public sector, the Women's Employment and Women in Non-Traditional Occupations programs have helped break down barriers to entry in non-traditional job fields. The new National Training Act, which has directed resources towards improved job training, provides important support to women wishing to enhance or update their job skills.

The Government has moved to help many women who are working parents. It enriched the child tax credit to \$343 per child and doubled the child care expense deduction to \$2,000 per child. The Unemployment Insurance Act was amended to provide greater flexibility and equity in the determination of eligibility for maternity benefits, and to extend these benefits to adoptive parents.

For those staying at home to care for their children, pension coverage was improved with the introduction of a child rearing dropout provision to the Canada Pension Plan. It entitles mothers or fathers to remain outside the labour force while their children are under the age of seven without sacrificing future pension benefits.

The Government has addressed the problem of violence against women through major amendments to the parts of the Criminal Code dealing with sexual offences. These amendments replace the offence of rape with various offences of sexual assault, and provide additional protection to women through elimination of spousal immunity and elimination of the need for corroboration of a complainant's testimony.

Amendments to the Human Rights Act also afford increased protection to women, particularly against sexual harassment.

And the most fundamental step of all has been taken by enshrining the principle of equal rights for men and women in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Young people have also been a particular focus for Government action, which dealt with the primary concerns of youth employment and academic prospects.

The young, lacking employment experience, have been a particular casualty of the recession at the very point in their lives at which they should be acquiring job skills and developing sound work habits. To deal with this situation, the Government has launched a series of initiatives directed specifically towards jobs for younger workers.

A Youth Wage Subsidy and Internship Program has been established to help young people obtain work experience and on-the-job training. Katimavik, the Youth Job Corps Program, and the Summer Youth Employment Program have all been expanded. An Extended Youth Training and Employment Program run by the Department of National Defence has been established to provide employment and vocational training.

Young people will be major beneficiaries of the National Training Act. Under this Act, 1.2 billion dollars has been made available during the current fiscal year alone for improved job training opportunities and facilities. The Act also provides for federal assistance to people enrolled in provincial and private educational courses.

Altogether, more than 300,000 young people will have been assisted this year by these and other federal training and employment programs.

Amendments also have been made to the Canada Student Loans Act which almost double the maximum annual amount available to individual students and which broaden the eligibility criteria for loans to include those studying part-time. The program will have benefited 185,000 students this year.

A new Young Offenders Act affords increased protection to young people accused of crimes by giving them explicit rights under the law, raising the age of criminal responsibility from seven to twelve, and providing for destruction of court records when sentences have been served and certain other criteria met.

The Government has given the needs of the handicapped special consideration.

The handicapped are one of the designated groups to which the public service affirmative action program is directed. In addition, a Program for the Employment Disadvantaged has been introduced to develop private sector opportunities for handicapped workers.

Amendments have been made to the Human Rights Act to protect the disabled from discrimination.

A Parliamentary Task Force on the Disabled and Handicapped tabled its report during 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons, recommending government initiatives to improve job opportunities and living conditions for the handicapped. Significant progress has already been made on more than two thirds of these recommendations, while steps are being taken to address the remaining third. Examples of recommendations being implemented include the allocation of five percent of housing units built under certain Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation programs to specially designed units for the disabled, and significant modifications to airports, train stations, ferries, bus terminals and other federal buildings to improve their accessibility.

The Secretary of State has been named the Minister responsible for issues affecting the disabled, and a status of disabled persons secretariat has been established within his department.

Energy Security at a Fair Price

The second major goal for Parliament set out at the opening of this session was that of achieving energy security at a fair price. The Government introduced the National Energy Program and signed agreements with the oil-producing provinces. A blended, made-in-Canada oil price, fair to producers and consumers, has resulted in average wellhead prices significantly below world levels. Recent amendments to the federal-provincial energy agreements give Canadians additional assurances of price stability over an 18 month period, as well as a guarantee that wholesale natural gas prices in the large eastern Canadian markets will not exceed 65 percent of the price of oil. In western Canada these prices are even lower. The commitment made in 1980 not to impose an 18¢ increase in the excise tax on transportation fuels has been honoured.

You were told three years ago that the Government would take steps to achieve 50 percent Canadian ownership of the petroleum industry by 1990. At that time, 28 percent of our petroleum production was owned by Canadians. Today, in large part because of a strengthened Petro-Canada and an incentive system designed to promote Canadian ownership, that figure is at 38 percent. Furthermore, a majority of all exploration expenditures now are undertaken by Canadian controlled companies, compared to three years ago when only 34 percent were Canadian controlled. As well, a new Canadian petroleum company, Co-Enerco, was established as a result of collaboration between the cooperative movement and the federal Government.

Energy conservation and the shift from oil to other fuels have both accelerated as a result of incentives put in place during the past three years. The Canadian Home Insulation Program has been extended and the eligibility criteria broadened. So far 1.8 million homes have received grants towards improved insulation, meaning average savings of 17 percent on heating bills. Natural gas pricing policy and off-oil conversion grants have helped to reduce the number of households heated by oil from 42 percent to 31 percent in the past three years. Grants have been provided for the conversion of vehicles to propane fuel, and a pilot project has been launched to investigate the feasibility of compressed natural gas as an alternative fuel. An alternate energy corporation, Canertech, has been established to carry out research and development on renewable energy forms.

The Government's vigorous promotion of conservation and oil substitution has helped reduce domestic demand so much that this year Canada achieved oil self-sufficiency. Only a few years ago, 1990 was considered an optimistic target for attaining self-sufficiency and we have hit it seven years early. Today, Canada has a cumulative 1983 crude oil trade surplus of over 300 million dollars and an overall energy trade surplus of 5 billion dollars.

The Government has aided companies willing to undertake major energy development projects. Despite softening world oil prices, several major projects were announced within the last two years—for instance, oil sands developments at Wolf Lake and Cold Lake, expansion at Syncrude in Fort McMurray, a heavy oil upgrader in Regina, and the Norman Wells project.

Since you were told that Petro-Canada would be expanded and its budget increased, it has more than doubled the value of its assets. The corporation's share of retail revenues in the petroleum industry has now risen to eleven percent, from less than two percent in 1979, reflecting an increase both in the number of retail outlets and in consumer support. Petro-Canada has been actively involved in Canadian exploration, particularly in risky frontier areas. Today, Petro-Canada is at work in every part of the country, and Canadians are proud of their national energy corporation.