

*The Address—Mrs. Erola*

this nation, a role which will greatly expand in the years ahead.

Before I begin my remarks I would like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Rimouski (Mrs. Côté) for her eloquent speech in moving the motion for this debate, and similarly congratulate and thank my colleague and friend, the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith), who seconded the motion to begin the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I would indeed be remiss if I did not also thank the people of Nickel Belt who sent me here to Ottawa to represent them. May I simply say to them that I will do my best to ensure that the faith, the trust and the confidence they have placed in me will indeed prove well-founded. I can assure them that I will actively solicit their views and their assistance in the weeks ahead.

I am, of course, delighted to have been asked by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to serve my country in the cabinet as the new Minister of State (Mines). I look forward to this additional responsibility with anticipation. It is, however, an anticipation tempered with a sober humility, humility that stems from the responsibility which I now feel falls upon me, as a northerner, to bring a different perspective to the cabinet table.

I am well aware of the problems and hardships of living in the north and, likewise, I have a sensitivity to the issues of northern expansion and development. It is now my duty to ensure that the northern perspective is given a fair hearing when decisions are being made. Due to the increased concern and emphasis on the energy sector since the OPEC price increases, the mines and minerals sector of the Canadian economy has been somewhat ignored. This is unfortunate because this sector of the Canadian economy has far-reaching consequences in terms of Canada's future economic vitality and, indeed, it has been an important element in Canada's growth and prosperity in the past.

It is no secret that Canada is one of the most richly endowed nations in the world in terms of natural resources. Our northern frontier areas have barely been utilized, and the promise that they hold is vast indeed. I have just returned from a trip to British Columbia and Yellowknife and, contrary to the views of the member who spoke previous to me, the economy is very much alive and well in those parts of the country.

However, the 1980s will certainly not be an easy decade, and in economic terms the strength of our economy will be put to a severe test. In a world of frantic competition and increasingly isolationist national tendencies, Canada will need sound planning and a solid policy base. The mining sector will play an ever more important role in Canada's future economic growth.

There is much activity in the mineral sector today. During the past 12 months several announcements of mine expansion and new mine development have been made. Indeed, in British Columbia 11 new mines are opening this year. New discoveries in the Yukon and Northwest Territories provide the promise of

another mineral boom over the next decade that will contribute to regional development, provide new employment opportunities, and add significantly to per capita incomes.

As Minister of State (Mines) I am dedicated to achieving the potential that exists in the Canadian resource sector. The problems that the resource sector faces may not be that evident to the general public, but they pose a real hardship to the eventual achievement of this potential. The mineral sector of the economy is cyclical in nature. It can experience highs of increased activity and economic strength as we are experiencing now, and it can experience lows of both activity and strength, as was evident a few years ago. The mineral sector is first and foremost dependent on the world economy and world markets. This boom-bust syndrome has resulted in a very large degree of general uncertainty. This uncertainty acts to stifle the efforts of industry, governments and unions to solve the mutually-shared problems of the mineral sector.

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The mining sector of the economy will generate 2,100 new job opportunities in the next decade. However, the industry in general has presently been experiencing considerable difficulty attracting and retaining qualified personnel. The government is working with the industry to develop training programs that will provide the necessary expertise for the future. The Department of Employment and Immigration has in place a program to provide mobility grants of up to \$4,500, which directly relates to the minerals industry. I am happy to report that during my visit to the Lornex Mine in British Columbia I found that 45 families from Atikokan have taken advantage of the mobility grant and now are settled in the Logan Lake community, and more are to follow.

Of course the mines and mining communities themselves must undergo significant change. It is no secret that mining continues to have one of the highest fatality rates of all industries, and also relatively high injury rates. Person days lost from work related injuries on average exceed those lost through strikes and lockouts. Recently there has been increasing evidence concerning health problems which originate from the work environment—lung cancer, asbestosis, and heavy metal poisoning.

The general area of occupational health and safety is one of my primary concerns. It is clear that unsatisfactory health and safety conditions make the mining environment less attractive to new workers, and it is important that health and safety enforcement be carried out in the most effective manner. The full potential of the industry can only be reached if it is able to attract and retain a productive labour force over the long term, and this cannot be achieved with unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. We must work together, governments, industry and the unions, to develop new standards and new technology on occupational health and safety. Indeed I am confident that there will be an announcement with respect to this situation in the very near future.

I would like to reaffirm my personal commitment to improving the safety standards of federally regulated mines, in par-