

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments? We will proceed with debate.

Mr. John Gormley (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the House for this opportunity to speak on the Speech from the Throne. I would like to begin by extending my sincere gratitude to the people of northwestern Saskatchewan who live in my constituency of The Battlefords-Meadow Lake. These people have given me the honour and the privilege of being their servant in the Thirty-third Parliament of Canada.

When one reflects on the outcome of the September 4 general election, one sees that the people of northwestern Saskatchewan and their counterparts around the country voted for a change in government. They did not vote for change for the sake of change but for a significant, markedly different sort of government, a government that the citizens would like to have effect not only new policy initiatives but also a new process and a new way of governing. This way of governing is a consultative, positive, open form of government.

As debate on the Throne Speech continues, I am pleased to be able to speak on this occasion on behalf of my constituents from The Battlefords-Meadow Lake. I would like to explain my riding to Hon. Members. It comprises the entire northwest of the Province of Saskatchewan. It is truly a beautiful area of the country comprising almost 100,000 square miles. It is also large.

From the wheat fields to the rolling hills to the forest country of the north, this constituency comprises a vast array of people and backgrounds. There are 65,000 people living in The Battlefords-Meadow Lake with one-third of them residing in The Battlefords, which is the major economic hub of the constituency. The Battlefords is located on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River with the Town of Battleford to the south and the larger City of North Battleford to the north.

The Battlefords provides goods and services to a constituency that is largely dependent on agriculture. Many of my other constituents live in smaller centres, the largest of which is Meadow Lake with a population of 5,000. The smaller communities are strongly tied to agriculture and reflect a diversity in ethnic backgrounds. There are the Francophone communities of Jack Fish, Vawn, Edam and Leoville, the early Ukrainian settlements of Krydor, Hafford and Speers and the many other communities like Paradise Hill, Spiritwood, Glaslyn and Big River.

In the northern area of my riding, beyond this strongly agricultural base, is the largest geographic area of the riding, the far north. This is home to several thousand constituents who live in communities like Patuanak, Beauval, Île à la Crosse and Buffalo Narrows. There is now a tiny settlement in the far north of my riding which remains as a sad legacy to the former government. It was called Uranium City.

In my constituency of The Battlefords-Meadow Lake, the concern of most people is farming. Farmers have defied misguided government policies of the past decade by adapting to rising costs, but these costs reflect values of 1984 while the

prices the farmers receive for their products reflect prices of 1972. This dichotomy, which is known as the cost-price squeeze, has forced many farmers in my constituency off their land. For many of their counterparts who remain, life is difficult, even for the people in the urban centre of The Battlefords whose livelihoods and professions depend upon the viability of farms. It is with this commitment to agriculture that I come to Parliament.

Prominent too in my constituency is the oil industry which, in the community and surrounding area of The Battlefords, employs some 200 people who work in oil development, on the rigs, on the service rigs and in the other industries associated with oil.

The Battlefords-Meadow Lake has several other unique features. Twenty-two per cent of my constituents are of native origin. There are 19 Indian reservations in The Battlefords-Meadow Lake. It is with growing concern that I see the plight of the native person on the reserve. This person is often neglected by the society in which he or she lives, a society which starts with our past Parliament of Canada and extends down even to the Indian leadership which, in often cases, is less responsible for the needs of its people than it should be.

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In my constituency of The Battlefords-Meadow Lake there are many elderly people. Because this is a farming, agrarian community, families tend to stay closer to one another. Often farmers retire to the urban area of The Battlefords while their families take over the farm. Older members of society demand from us a better world for their children and for their grandchildren.

Cognizant of this, we should address our country's business as we have in this Speech from the Throne. In that Speech our Government has made commitments which appeal to the people of western Canada, and particularly those in my constituency. Our Government has promised, in an open and forthright fashion, reconciliation, renewal and economic growth. These themes are suitable within the framework of social justice and can be further paraphrased in three sentiments: common sense, honesty and fairness. Every person growing up in small-town Saskatchewan knows that honesty, fairness and common sense are what comprise truly successful people, farmers, families and traditions.

If one looks at the history of Saskatchewan, they will see that the early pioneer knew that life was more bearable for everyone if people co-operated rather than confronted. This spirit of co-operation grew from helping a neighbour or fellow farmer into the co-operative movement and the credit union movement which are still so vital a part of Saskatchewan today. Much of western Canada owes its present prosperity to the fact that the early settlers realized that consultation, co-operation and sharing made society move ahead. It is that same commitment which is in the Throne Speech.

I find it rather odd that critics of the Government find it distasteful that emphasis has been placed on co-operation and consultation at the expense of belligerence, arrogance and