

*The Address—Mr. McCreath*

At the same time, provision must be made for alleviating measures for those Canadians who will be disadvantaged by the national consensus. Let us face it, Madam Speaker, one cannot at all times accommodate what are often very diverse or differing needs on any given issue or any given policy decision. Therefore, Government has to be prepared to provide alleviating measures for those who may from time to time be disadvantaged by specific proposals or issues. That is why programs are targeted at responding to specific regional development needs. Such programs, most recently articulated in the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and comparable programs, to target the particular needs of regions such as my own are in fact a cornerstone of Canadian society, a cornerstone of governmental policy and practice. I am delighted that this concept was clearly and unequivocally reinforced in the Speech from the Throne that was delivered on Monday last.

My Canada is a compassionate, caring society which extends to all its people. In a nation with the wealth and resources that we have, no Canadians should suffer from lack of adequate housing or nutrition, or from lack of adequate health care services or social security. One of the blessings we have developed over the years is probably the best health-care system in the world, a health-care system that is safeguarded and preserved, and under the sound economic management of this Government will grow during the years to come.

Our society is one in which Canadians should never suffer from deprivation or from violence, particularly violence in the home. As a priority we must ensure that our children are safe and that they do not suffer from child abuse or neglect in any way. We must ensure that our children have the best education because they are our resource for developing this country in the future.

Our Canada must be a Canada in which there is respect and dignity for all, particularly for our senior citizens, and for those who suffer from disabilities.

Self-reliance goes hand in hand with self-respect. Our national goal must be to ensure that basic social needs and security are recognized as the basic rights for all Canadians.

My Canada is a multicultural Canada. For the past 400 years we have been a nation of immigrants; even the native peoples originally came from other lands. Our nation will continue to be a nation of immigrants.

In recent years every economic demographic study done has shown that in the years ahead we will have a need for more immigrants. Therefore, our immigration system is vitally important to the future of this country. It must be a system that is fair and open to all, all who meet the legitimate criteria for entrance. At the same time, it must be one that is fair to those who have special needs. We must have provisions for bona fide refugees, those whose lives are indeed imperilled in their lands of origin. However, at the same time the system must be fair in the sense of requiring that all of those who wish to come to our country are prepared to wait their fair turn in line. In this regard I compliment the Government for the efforts and the provisions it has put in place in an effort to come to grips with this extremely difficult problem that has plagued our country over the past two or three years.

Our multicultural Canada must be based on two concepts that are the bases of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act that was enacted by Parliament last year, the concept of cultural freedom, the concept that every Canadian is free to be what he or she perceives themselves to be, and on the concept of equity and fairness for all. That means equality of access as well as equality of opportunity.

Over the years ahead we must build on the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. We must extend the implications of the employment equity provisions. In the Speech from the Throne reference was made to revisions to the Citizenship Act. I see the Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship) (Mr. Weiner) is present. I look forward, Mr. Minister, to seeing those provisions coming forth.

This is the vision of Canada that we must work toward. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, how the South Shore, my constituency, fits into this perspective. I believe it remarkably typifies the best of what is Canadian. It is a constituency that extends 150 miles from my home in Hubbards to Charlesville, a community that Canadians will remember. It was the community that was so hospitable to the refugees who came to our shores through the night a year and a half ago.