

The Address

addressed because this program is supposed to deal with basic infrastructure problems.

Initially, that was the program proposed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Today, Ontario is even accepting school boards as local administrations. This means school boards as well as municipalities will be eligible.

The first project in the program, the convention centre in Quebec City, is not a renovation project or basic infrastructure or even locally-based infrastructure. How much will there be left of the \$6 billion for the FCM's project? There will not be enough left. They said \$20 billion was needed. In 1985, it was \$12 billion, and now this has been revised upward to \$20 billion.

Where is the critical mass of this program? In its agreement, the government never gives carte blanche for any kind of project, and I am sure the President of the Treasury Board is going to be very happy because for the first time in perhaps 20 years, he will not be just a budget cutter. He will also be able to dole out subsidies, but these agreements contain no restrictions on what the federal government can do. Just read the agreements. If you look at them from the provincial point of view, you will see they contain everything the federal government needs to get involved in all stages of the project.

The hon. member also mentioned the Bloc's position as the Official Opposition. Yes, we are. I spent most of my speech talking about the infrastructure project because I take that position very seriously.

We will get back to this if necessary, but as far as I am concerned, when Quebec's interests are at stake, and I mentioned the mandate we sought and received from the people of Quebec, when our interests do not coincide with those of other Canadian provinces which may prefer to let the federal government interfere with certain jurisdictions, we will consider Quebec's right to object to this kind of interference and will always defend the interests of Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South): Madam Speaker, on this first occasion that I have had to speak in the House I want to begin by thanking the constituents who put me here.

I have been elected twice provincially. This was my first time running federally but never in an election campaign have I been questioned as closely and as carefully as I was in this one. The people in my riding wanted to know what I stood for, what I was going to do if I got here, and what I am doing every day I am here.

It is passing strange to me that it was such an unusual move to put a party's platform in a book. It is stranger still that people are surprised when the government acts on the promises it makes.

I also thank my wife, Karen, and my daughter, Sarah. The hardest thing I have to do as a member here is be away from them. It is something we are all going to have to adjust to. They make a big sacrifice. All members make that sacrifice and I do not think people realize that.

I thank the 1,400 volunteers who worked thousands of hours over the last 18 months so that I could get elected. They did not ask for anything in doing that. All they wanted and all they want today is a government that reflects their values. They are still coming around to my office. They are still looking for ways in which they can volunteer their time and energy to share in the process of governing. I am honoured by their participation.

● (1650)

Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you and the Speaker and all members who were elected to serve this House, and through you I want to thank all of the staff that serve this House. As a rookie member here I have been remarkably well treated everywhere I have gone. I really appreciate the support of all of those who do not get recognized in the work that this House does.

I also want, through you Madam Speaker, to thank the many thousands of people who work for the federal government. There was a time not too long ago when the previous Prime Minister stood in front of a scrum and said that all he had to offer the civil servants of Canada were pink slips and running shoes. I thought then that that was a shameful experience.

How do you expect people to carry out the programs if that is the way you treat them? No company on earth would survive if it treated its employees the way the previous government treated the public service of this country. I caution some of the members opposite because I hear some of that same language coming through, as though somehow the people who carry out the work of this House are the enemy. We need to reflect on that.

I also want to thank Dorothy Dobbie and Mark Hughes. Dorothy was the member for Winnipeg South in this House prior to me and Mark was the Reform Party candidate who ran against me. We debated 20 times during the course of the election and we managed to keep every debate on the issues and never once resorted to personalities. I really want to thank them for that.

I come from the province of Manitoba. We talk a lot in this House about the upheaval that has happened in Quebec, the election of the Bloc Quebecois, or the upheaval that took place in Alberta and British Columbia with the massive election of the Reform Party. Well, an upheaval took place in Manitoba. We elected 12 Liberals. In fact we elected 21 Liberals in the prairies. Back when I was working for the Liberal Party in the seventies there was only one Liberal in all of western Canada. But it is no surprise that we did not elect a single Conservative in the prairie region.