

presented to Parliament a program embodying an obvious willingness to dismantle the social security system and maintain an unfair tax system, thereby further undermining the financial well-being of a growing number of citizens."

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

• (1625)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, before anything else, let me congratulate you on your election last Monday which was exceptional in a way. As you know, your role is a fundamental one in our democratic institutions. Let me assure you today that my government and the members of my party will support you at all times and will try to facilitate your work in every possible way.

I would also like to congratulate the two members who moved the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the members for Bruce—Grey and Madawaska—Victoria. Although they are new at this, they showed us how wise their constituents were in choosing them as their representatives in this House.

I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that they will enjoy a long and outstanding career in this House.

[*English*]

There is no greater honour than standing before you in this House as Prime Minister of Canada. I will do my best to make a contribution to this great work in progress we know as Canada. In fact, each of us in this House has a role to play and a responsibility in that area.

I want to salute and welcome the men and women from all parties whom Canadians elected to the House of Commons on October 25.

This session of Parliament has an unprecedented number of new members. More than two-thirds of the women and men in this House are new to Parliament. It is the biggest injection of new energy in the history of this institution. I look forward to the new spirit that will come from this fresh Parliament. Canadians are looking for members of all parties in this House to work together in a very constructive way and I am confident that we can work together on many issues of importance to the people of our constituencies and of our country as a whole.

[*Translation*]

If there are a record number of new members in the House, there are also a few well-known figures such as the Government House leader who has been part of our political scene for 31 years, I am told, and other veterans such as the members for Ottawa—Vanier and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who have been present in this House for so long they should serve as models for many of us. I would also call upon the many new party members to consult them occasionally as they could be of service. They

### *The Address*

are familiar with this House and have made some very positive contributions throughout their successful career.

• (1630)

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to the people of the constituency of Saint-Maurice, a region that knows me and understands me very well. I want my constituents to know that I will work hard for them and that I am deeply honoured to serve for the ninth time in my life as the honourable member for Saint-Maurice, a responsibility which gives me the greatest pleasure of all. I will always be very grateful for this opportunity.

The people of Saint-Maurice want the same things as their fellow Canadians across the country. They want their government and their elected representatives to begin the much-needed process of healing the country. They want them to set aside old grievances and debates and to focus on building a country that we will be proud to leave to our children.

What kind of country do the constituents of Saint-Maurice want? What kind of country do Canadians want? They want a country full of hope instead of fear, a country where each person is an equal partner and can make a contribution, rather than be a burden to society. They want a country where adults can find a decent, interesting job, a country where children can dream of a happy future. They want a country that recognizes our communities as the pillars of social stability and economic strength, a country with a dynamic economy, one which fosters the entrepreneurial spirit and which is on the cutting edge of technological progress and change.

They want a country where the government listens to them and respects them. Finally, they want a competent, honest and fair government, one that keeps its promises and helps them achieve their potential. That is what Canadians want and that is what this government will endeavour to give them.

[*English*]

Everything we do during this Parliament will be aimed at healing the deep wounds in our country, at restoring the bonds of trust and respect between Canadians and the government. It will be aimed at rebuilding our economic vitality to ensure that every Canadian is able to realize his or her full potential.

Canadians voted for that kind of government on October 25. Above all, Canadians voted for a government that follows through on its commitments, that keeps its word and lives up to its promises.

From the moment we took office a little more than two months ago we have been working to keep the pledges we made to the Canadian people. We have done what we said we would do.

For example, on November 4 we cancelled the \$5.8 billion helicopter program, a luxury we did not need and could not afford. The same day we introduced a 23-member cabinet, the