

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 22, 1988

The House met at 11 a.m.

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## Prayers

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### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

#### VISIBLE MINORITIES

##### JAPANESE CANADIANS INTERED DURING WORLD WAR II— NATIONAL REDRESS

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, nearly half a century ago, in the crisis of wartime, the Government of Canada wrongfully incarcerated, seized the property, and disenfranchised thousands of citizens of Japanese ancestry. We cannot change the past. But we must, as a nation, have the courage to face up to these historical facts.

The issue of Japanese-Canadian redress is one which I raised in the House of Commons more than four years ago with the Prime Minister of the day when I was Leader of the Opposition. I said then in this House:

There is a world of difference between regret and a formal apology. Canadians of Japanese origin had their rights trampled upon. The reputation of this country was besmirched.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, the present Government has sought a settlement with the Japanese-Canadian community to put things right between them and their country; to put things right with the surviving members of the Japanese-Canadian wartime community of 22,000 persons; to put things right with their children, and ours, so that they can walk together in this country, burdened neither by the wrongs nor the grievances of previous generations.

It is fitting that representatives of the National Association of Japanese Canadians are present in the visitors' gallery on this solemn occasion because today I have the honour to announce, on behalf of the Government of Canada, that a comprehensive redress settlement has been reached with the National Association of Japanese Canadians on behalf of their community.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mulroney:** Perhaps the most important element of this redress is the official acknowledgement of the wrongs of the 1940s. But redress must go beyond words and laws—important as they are for our present understanding and our future actions. The Minister of State for Multiculturalism and

Citizenship (Mr. Weiner) will be announcing the details of the settlement, and I pay special tribute today to his skill and resolve in this matter, and to the Secretary of State (Mr. Bouchard) who, immediately after his swearing in as a Minister of the Crown, made the resolution of this important moral issue a matter of the highest priority for him and his colleagues. In a special way, I readily acknowledge the strong moral leadership on this particular question and, indeed, others, that has long been provided by the Hon. Member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser), the very distinguished Speaker of the House of Commons.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mulroney:** Mr. Speaker, I think all Members of the House know that no amount of money can right the wrong, undo the harm, and heal the wounds. But it is symbolic of our determination to address this issue, not only in the moral sense but also in a tangible way. In that spirit, we will accept applications for the granting of Canadian citizenship to eligible persons of Japanese ancestry who were expelled from Canada or had their citizenship revoked during these years. We will also accept requests for the clearing of names of eligible persons of Japanese ancestry who were convicted of violations under the War Measures Act—thankfully now gone from our texts of law in Canada—and the National Emergency Transitional Powers Act.

As well, in commemoration of all who suffered these injustices, we will establish a Canadian Race Relations Foundation to foster racial harmony and cross-cultural understanding in Canada.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, not only was the treatment inflicted on Japanese—Canadians during the War both morally and legally unjustified, it went against the very nature of our country, of Canada. We are a pluralistic society. We each respect the language, opinions and religious convictions of our neighbour. We celebrate our linguistic duality and our cultural diversity. We know that the strength of our country lies in the collective energies of its regions. We are tolerant people who live in freedom in a land of abundance. That is the Canada of our ancestors. That is the Canada our ancestors worked to build. That is the kind of country we want to leave our children, the Canada of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms,