

assumption of a notable role by women as senators over the past half century.

I should like to pay tribute to those women. However, I would prefer to do so in a collective rather than in an individual fashion for fear of failing to do justice to the wide and varying individual accomplishments. I wish to say that an extremely high standard has been established. I am very much honoured to follow the path which they have blazed. I aspire to the quality of public service which they have offered throughout the years.

I would make one exception to this collective tribute and specifically acknowledge, as have others here today, the manner in which the outgoing Speaker, Senator Lapointe, performed her duties. The role of Speaker in a chamber such as this is a demanding one, and she is to be commended in this regard.

Honourable senators, one element of His Excellency's Speech from the Throne to which I would like to speak briefly is the theme which proposes a desire to encourage individual Canadians to build a stake in our country. This is a theme with which I can most readily identify and consider to be in the forefront of pressing matters which confront our nation.

Perhaps I might best address this matter in relation to my personal background from three perspectives: I am a woman; I am an Albertan; and I am a resident of a rural community.

Firstly, to consider this rural perspective, I am in some respects representative of Canadians who do not reside in urban centres. My home community is Warspite, Alberta. Perhaps the most graphic description which has been used to emphasize the rural characteristic of Warspite would be the recent headline in the *Ottawa Journal* announcing my appointment. It stated, "Senator Bielish . . . called in from the field". They did not know how true that was. Although I am not as active in this area as I previously was, my husband, Joseph, is a farmer, and I am from that school which combines partner in marriage and partner in family enterprise. As an active participant in such an all-encompassing partnership, I have always had a fulfilling lifestyle and have perceived that I have a very real stake in our family satisfaction and family prosperity. Accordingly, it is a rather natural response that one gains a perspective of having a stake in the country. I am of the belief that all Canadians must be encouraged to develop a feeling of pride and involvement, regardless of background.

Secondly, I am a woman and have developed a keen interest in the wide range of women's issues. Through my participation in the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, the Associated Country Women of the World, and others, I have become sensitive to the very considerable ability and insight which women have to offer in every realm of public and private activity. I think it is incumbent upon this country to be a leader in encouraging women—as this country has been a leader in many other fields—to seek the very utmost of their potential and to ensure that once this potential has been realized it be suitably utilized. I am confident that Canadian women are currently making tremendous progress toward the

realization of this aim and that they will certainly be assisted as they do so.

Thirdly, I am an Albertan, and this provides me with a particular perspective on the evolution of federal-provincial relations. In recent years my native province has prospered rather considerably, primarily as a result of its wealth in natural resources. I am delighted that an expanded financial base has allowed the province of Alberta to provide further security of opportunity to its people. However, we in Alberta also have a much broader stake in this country. We recognize that Albertan prosperity must in some fashion be translated into Canadian prosperity. Alberta's increased prosperity is not a negative component of the Canadian experience; rather it must be viewed as a great Canadian asset. Albertans view this moment in time as an unprecedented opportunity. It is an opportunity for Alberta to work constructively with the other provinces for the common advantage.

We in the Senate and House of Commons would be remiss in our duty if we did not recognize this great potential and respond, to the best of our ability, so as to achieve great results.

Honourable senators, in the pursuit of our goals, I believe that ultimately we must utilize our individual characteristics and backgrounds. However, we must rise above mere personal circumstances and identify with the common Canadian experience. We must create an environment in which every Canadian feels a need to contribute and has an opportunity to do so. May I assure you that I approach this task with no illusions as to its difficulty, yet I am confident that the importance of Canada's future will be sufficient incentive for us all.

[*Translation*]

**Senator Charbonneau:** Honourable senators, I am all the more thankful to take the floor to support the motion to adopt the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne that it is my first opportunity to address this famous house, the highest and most venerable in the country.

The role of the Senate in the political life of our country will increase during this session because of the additional responsibilities some of us have agreed to take by joining the cabinet. I take the opportunity to congratulate them and to express to them my gratitude for having courageously accepted to serve the Canadian people while it implied a great personal sacrifice for them. You will also probably understand that it is a significant testimony towards this house.

I think that we are in the presence of a tangible mark of trust because the abolition of the Upper House was still proposed recently in some circles. Given the new close relationship between both Houses, it is up to us to continue to demonstrate the positive contribution we can make to Canadian politics. That contribution will be all the more important now that the Senate will be presided over by Senator Allister Grosart, who has been a friend of mine for 25 years, and who has been able to heighten the debates in this house for more than 16 years. I want to congratulate him and to offer him my complete and very sincere support.