

to dedicate her career to serving the government and the Prime Minister.

Honourable senators probably read in the press about the tragic death last week of Michèle Bédard, formerly advisor to the Prime Minister on women's issues. Mrs. Bédard brought to this task a thorough knowledge of our society, acquired both academically and through personal and professional experience, all of which was rewarding both for herself and the people in her environment.

Her tragic death marks the loss of an old friend.

The Prime Minister has lost a loyal and dedicated collaborator whose judicious and enlightened advice was instrumental in guiding the course of policies initiated by the government.

I know I speak for all senators in extending to the children of Mrs. Bédard and the other members of her family our feelings of profound sympathy.

Honourable senators, as were all others before me, I am grateful for the honour bestowed on me when I was invited to move the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

And as was also the case for many of my predecessors, it is the first time I have been given an opportunity to speak in this chamber. I of course had occasion to take part in the business of this chamber before the summer recess, more specifically in the work of some of the committees. I was able to work with several honourable senators and I could appreciate the diligence, wisdom and experience they brought to their task.

Like so many members of this chamber, I came to the Senate after years of experience acquired working for a political party and its leaders.

I realize that I am in good company here on both sides of this chamber, and I must say it is a pleasure. My past experience will probably be the basis for my participation in our debates and our work. Moreover, my contribution will always be marked by sincerity, dedication and diligence, within the modest limits of my capabilities.

The Speech from the Throne delivered yesterday by Her Excellency marked, it seems to me, a decisive stage in the life of this government. Half-way through its term, it offers Canadians a new legislative agenda, to improve continuity and to increase action in areas that received less attention during the first session.

The government has had to continue its action in all sectors of our economy. The figures are eloquent. The economy has reacted well to initiatives taken in the last two years. Whether we are talking about interest rates, the rate of inflation, the unemployment rate, the situation of Canada has improved considerably during the first half of this government's term.

But that is not enough. The situation inherited by the government was so disastrous that there was a lot of catching up to do. The task was enormous, and the government had to work twice as hard.

We cannot slacken now and we must continue these efforts. And that is what the government has decided to do, after

yesterday's proposal to take measures aimed at improving the competitive position of Canadian businesses on international markets, at improving the equality of the job environment, stimulating research and development and improving access to businesses and financial institutions, including co-operatives.

Consistent in its thrust, the Speech from the Throne indicates to us that the government will continue to implement its measures to restore financial health to Canada and thus create a more favourable climate for expansion, growth and the prosperity of all Canadians.

Just as significant as this economic commitment, yesterday's Speech from the Throne included an equally promising social justice objective.

The legislative agenda which has been set forth before both houses is ambitious. It fulfils the two major objectives of this legislative program. First of all, it will support and strengthen existing measures aimed at safeguarding the family while making it easier for women to have equal access to the labour market. The series of measures already announced will complete this legislative program.

Secondly, the other objective—just as important—will be achieved by reinforcing all measures of a primarily preventive nature, specifically those whose main purpose is to do away with the most obvious abuses which still plague our society. By that I mean the legislation related, for example, to prostitution, pornography, drug and alcohol abuse, the protection of women and children who are victims of violence.

The government is courageously and resolutely committed to restoring the quality of our environment and of our life, yet it is ever mindful of its basic responsibility to provide assistance to the underprivileged in our society.

During the next few days of debate on the Speech from the Throne, other senators—first the Honourable Senator Baroote, of course—will have an opportunity to lay more emphasis on various aspects which I may have missed in these short remarks.

On the other hand, as a senator from Quebec, I could not address this house without highlighting the commendable and sustained efforts of the government with respect to national reconciliation.

The Speech from the Throne reminds us that important questions have yet to be finally settled and remain on the agenda.

In this field, it seems to me that we must step up our efforts to put an end to the alienation felt by the Province of Quebec as a result of the 1982 Accord. We must also strive to fulfil the commitments concerning native people which the federal government and nine provinces made pursuant to that Accord.

On behalf of the government, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister has promised that he will spare no efforts to make sure that Quebec will, as he put it, resume with enthusiasm and dignity its rightful and important role as a full partner in the confederative agreement.