

*The Address**[English]*

This is why today is a very special day for me. It is an especially moving occasion for me, my first address in the Parliament of Canada. That I, who has come from so far away, indeed like many of my colleagues here in this House, should have the opportunity and privilege of taking a direct part in the political life of our country, is itself an eloquent testimony to the values of openness and generosity which characterize the Canadian spirit and way of life.

It is difficult for me to conceive that in theory this country could break up, not because of profound divergences as to the values, equity or democratic ideals that we share, but mainly because of language and culture.

It is indeed astounding to me to believe that we English speaking and French speaking Canadians who for close to two and a half centuries have shared geography and history, have shared the rigours and also the beauty of this vast land, but above all have contributed to building a common weal of shared values and experiences, a common way of life, a system of democratic politics and justice where fundamental freedoms have always flourished, could choose to tear up our common heritage because some of us live in French and some of us live in English.

*[Translation]*

I deeply respect the Quebecers who chose to be represented by a majority of members from a party advocating Quebec independence. However, while respecting that choice, I firmly believe that it will bring about results quite different from those targeted by my colleagues of the Bloc Quebecois as their primary goal.

In fact, their very presence here is, in my opinion, the most vivid and eloquent testimony of the greatness and the democratic value of Canada. How many countries in the world would have been so democratic as to welcome with complete freedom, in a peaceful and serene manner, in their main Parliament, parties which might destabilize them, if not dismantle them? The members of the Bloc Quebecois are the most striking evidence of the democratic value, the openness and the profound freedom of Canada.

● (1830)

*[English]*

As we enter the 21st century I am proud to belong to a party whose mandate in this critical juncture in our history is to restore the confidence of Canadians in our political system, to restore in them hope for the future, to govern in truth, fairness and integrity and above all to preserve the Canadian federation and its shared geography and values from sea to sea.

If Canadians have now reached a level of such deep cynicism and mistrust in our own institutions and in our collective capacity to change our lives for the better, if so many of my

compatriots in Quebec are turning inwardly toward the parochial panacea of separatism, it is because our institutions have failed them in their justifiable expectations.

As the one truly national party represented in this House, our responsibility is an onerous one: to preserve the integrity of this country by showing Canadians that their institutions can indeed change their lives for the better.

In laying the foundation for the Liberal government's mandate and program, the throne speech confirms our electoral commitments to redirect Canada toward the path of recovery and job creation, after several years of economic recession and consequent unemployment.

However it calls for far more. It calls for the restoration of integrity, honesty and responsible management in the conduct of our affairs. It calls for the government to set an example, both real and symbolic, of the kind of restraint and discipline that it asks of others. It calls for the renewal of hope for our young people, so dynamic, increasingly well qualified, yet for a very large number of them, despairing of that first job which will be the start of a meaningful career. It calls especially for our seniors and the disadvantaged in our society for the maintenance of our social safety net created and nurtured by Liberal governments over the decades.

It will mean a new approach to unemployment and welfare support systems that through training and other positive and constructive programs will give hope and dignity to the unemployed and their families. It will mean a more decisive place for women and minorities. I am so proud there are so many women and minority representatives in our ranks. It certainly means the recognition of the aspirations of our first peoples in the objective of taking charge of their own ways of life within Canada.

Importantly it reconfirms the status of our two official languages as the precious expression of our foundation and evolution as a fair country. In "Creating Opportunity", the Liberal electoral program, our party has set the course toward a sustainable society, a goal we should all endorse regardless of party affiliation.

No longer can we accept a society of waste where unbridled consumerism results in the unnecessary degradation of ecosystems and the natural resources that are the springboard and sustenance of life and living. No longer can we tolerate the despoliation of the ample resources with which we have been blessed and for which we are trustees.

*[Translation]*

We must change our way of life and our way of producing and start respecting the integrity of the ecosystems and their capacity to maintain and renew themselves. In a world which is more conscious of global equity, of the need to distribute more equitably the wealth between rich and poor countries, we cannot