

MOST OF YOU WILL KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THE EXTENT OF THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE VICTORY ON SEPTEMBER 4TH. WE WON TWO HUNDRED AND ELEVEN OUT OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY TWO SEATS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. WE WON A DECISIVE MAJORITY IN ALL TEN PROVINCES AND IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES. IN THE FRENCH SPEAKING PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, WHERE MY PARTY HAS HISTORICALLY HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY IN ESTABLISHING BROAD SUPPORT, WE TOOK FIFTY-EIGHT OUT OF A POSSIBLE SEVENTY-FIVE SEATS. TO PUT THAT IN PERSPECTIVE, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT GOING INTO THE SEPTEMBER ELECTION, WE HELD ONLY ONE SEAT IN QUEBEC.

IN THEMSELVES, THE NUMBERS ARE LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE VIRTUAL UNANIMITY OF THE VOTE FOR CHANGE. I HAVE BEEN IN PARLIAMENT LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT PEOPLE CHANGE BEFORE GOVERNMENTS DO, AND MY PARTICULAR EXPERIENCE ALLOWS ME TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A RELUCTANT MANDATE AND A DECISIVE ONE. THE SEPTEMBER ELECTION SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS AN OVERWHELMING DEMAND BY CANADIANS FOR AN END TO BOTH AN ERA OF CONFLICT AND A STYLE OF GOVERNMENT. IT IS ALSO AN ASSERTION OF CONFIDENCE, A SIGNAL THAT CANADIANS HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF LOOKING INWARD AND ARE REACHING OUT TO COMPETE, AND TO ACCEPT OUR DUTY, IN THE WIDER WORLD.

CANADA IS A COUNTRY OF GREAT POTENTIAL, AND GENERALLY GOOD PERFORMANCE. BUT, FOR TOO LONG, WE HAVE BEEN DEFINED ABROA