

consideration in later sessions of new programs that Ministers are already developing, it is proposed, during the current session, to elucidate priorities and to set in motion new policies. Of equal importance, though of far less drama, Parliament will be asked to deal with a host of matters essential to the smooth and up-to-date functioning of government which were not disposed of in the previous Parliament. My Government considers that its first responsibility, and the first responsibility of this Parliament, is to clear the accumulation of essential legislative adjustments, improvements and modernizations left over from the last Parliament. Unless they are cleared up promptly, efficient public administration and the effective operation of the Canadian economy and society will be hampered.

My Ministers believe that much of the delay and difficulty in the handling of Parliamentary business during recent years could have been avoided or reduced by the improvement of Parliamentary rules and procedures. It is their view that Canadians feel that Parliament is too far removed from the people it serves; its operations are too slow and ponderous; its deliberations are often insufficiently informed and its decisions are too few and too much delayed. In order that Parliamentary institutions may retain the confidence of the people, and in order that they may cope successfully with the vast scope and complexity of government today, it is essential that provision be made for legislative machinery that can act speedily on the large number of varied, detailed and complicated legislative, financial and policy questions that will be the normal, and indeed the growing, Parliamentary program of the future. My Government accords the greatest importance to Parliamentary reform and, to this end and as a matter of the highest priority, it has already had useful discussions with representatives of Opposition parties concerning changes in the rules and procedures of the House of Commons.

So that the Official Opposition, to which we in Canada give formal recognition as a vital part of our democratic process, as well as the other parties in opposition, may be in a position to cope more effectively with the heavy load of action and decision each session must face you will be asked to make new provision for the Official Opposition, and the other parties in their Parliamentary role. You will also be asked to consider additional facilities for the better discharge of the functions of Parliament generally.

My Government is deeply and irrevocably committed to the objectives of a just society and a prosperous economy in a peaceful world. My Ministers believe that the unity of the country is fundamental to the attainment of these goals, as—indeed—to the enjoyment by each Canadian of the maximum possible liberty, happiness and material well-being. Constitutional reform remains the best long-term guarantee of Canadian unity and my Ministers are directing officials in discussions with the Provinces which are proceeding well and will, through a series of intergovernmental conferences, lead to proposals that Parliament will wish to consider. In the meantime, however, to further the objective of a united Canada, you will be asked during the current session, to enact a totally new Official Languages Act based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. You will also be asked to approve a new Publication of Statutes Act to change the way in which the law of our bilingual land is presented and made known in both the official languages of our land. You will also be asked to consider measures relating to Indians, to citizenship, to national symbols, to cultural agencies, to transportation of all