

The Address

encourage pilot projects to see how this new technology infrastructure is going to work.

We are playing a role, for example, in the Canary project which is tying research facilities across Canada together. We recently had the pleasure of announcing in Ottawa—Carleton the establishment of the OCI net which is a measure to provide what will ultimately be a node on the information highway which is to come.

These are exciting possibilities. There are many more to come. We have a role to play. We need to remove the obstacles that impede economic development. We need to build on our strengths. Canada is a marvellous country. We believe in it. We can overcome the obstacles as we have in the past and we can build on our strengths.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger) Before proceeding to the 10 minutes of questions and comments, I wish to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 33(2)(b) because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 13 minutes.

[Translation]

We will open questions and comments with the hon. member for Québec—Est.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec—Est): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I am very pleased to be able to speak for the first time in this hon. Chamber, the symbol of democracy in Canada.

I believe that I am the last Bloc member to speak for the first time, but that does not take anything away from the importance I attach to my maiden speech or from the pleasure it gives me.

I am also especially honoured to be the member for Québec—Est and to represent that riding. I take the opportunity, as many of us have already done, to thank my constituents who had the good judgment to elect me as their member. I have the honour to represent a very beautiful riding in Quebec City and to have won by 21,000 votes. This is an impressive victory, all the more so since I ran against a very well-known personality in Quebec whose name I will not mention in this House.

I am a new member who intends to be a good MP and to represent his riding well. I come back to what the Minister of Industry said. I appreciated it as an opening. He said that we have an important responsibility to be honourable, to be sincere, to work hard because we have heavy responsibilities, and that is what I intend to do. I intend to do that for my constituents, especially since most of them voted for the Bloc knowing full well that we are a sovereignist party. I believe firmly in this option and I think that I will therefore defend it with great zeal and gusto.

• (1255)

I would also like to take the opportunity to raise a point which has not yet been raised and that surprises me a lot. We have had many discussions to date on the relative merits of Canada versus Quebec, as they relate to the question of sovereignty, and no one has yet spoken about the rights of francophones outside Quebec.

I would have liked the Speaker to be here today, not only to congratulate him on his election, and I take the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to congratulate you on your appointment. Nevertheless, I would have liked him to be here because he is a Franco-Ontarian. I have had a chance to discuss the issue of francophones outside Quebec with the Speaker, because he comes from Ontario, as I do. I am a native of Ontario myself.

[English]

I was born in Ontario.

[Translation]

That is why I am a sovereignist today: I was a francophone outside Quebec and I know the situation they are in.

If there is one thing that I will mention and emphasize in this House, it is the abuses and injustices which francophones outside Quebec have suffered. Many people talked about the virtues of Canada, like the Minister of Foreign Affairs and others yesterday and the day before, but I did not have a chance to answer. Now I will give my reply.

[English]

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just need some clarification. We had the Minister of Industry here. I thought I heard you say questions and comments. We asked the minister to stay here thinking there might be a question. I wondered if in fact there would be a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank the hon. member for his comment. Recognizing the member for Quebec—Est in his first intervention here in this House of this 35th Parliament I think seized the occasion. I understand and have witnessed all members making reference to their constituents, thanking them and so on. Certainly I want to give the floor back to the member for Quebec—Est and give him the opportunity to complete his comment and would hope that in the end it would allow time also for the Minister of Industry to reply to his comment.

[Translation]

Mr. Marchand: Mr. Speaker, I did not want to be too long in my introduction; I simply wanted to comment on the very interesting statements made by the Minister of Industry.

As was mentioned, the minister referred to several issues. He said, among other things, that one of the most important objectives stated in the Liberal Party's red book is the creation of jobs. It just so happens that I am the official critic for the Bloc on agricultural issues and these days the minister of agriculture